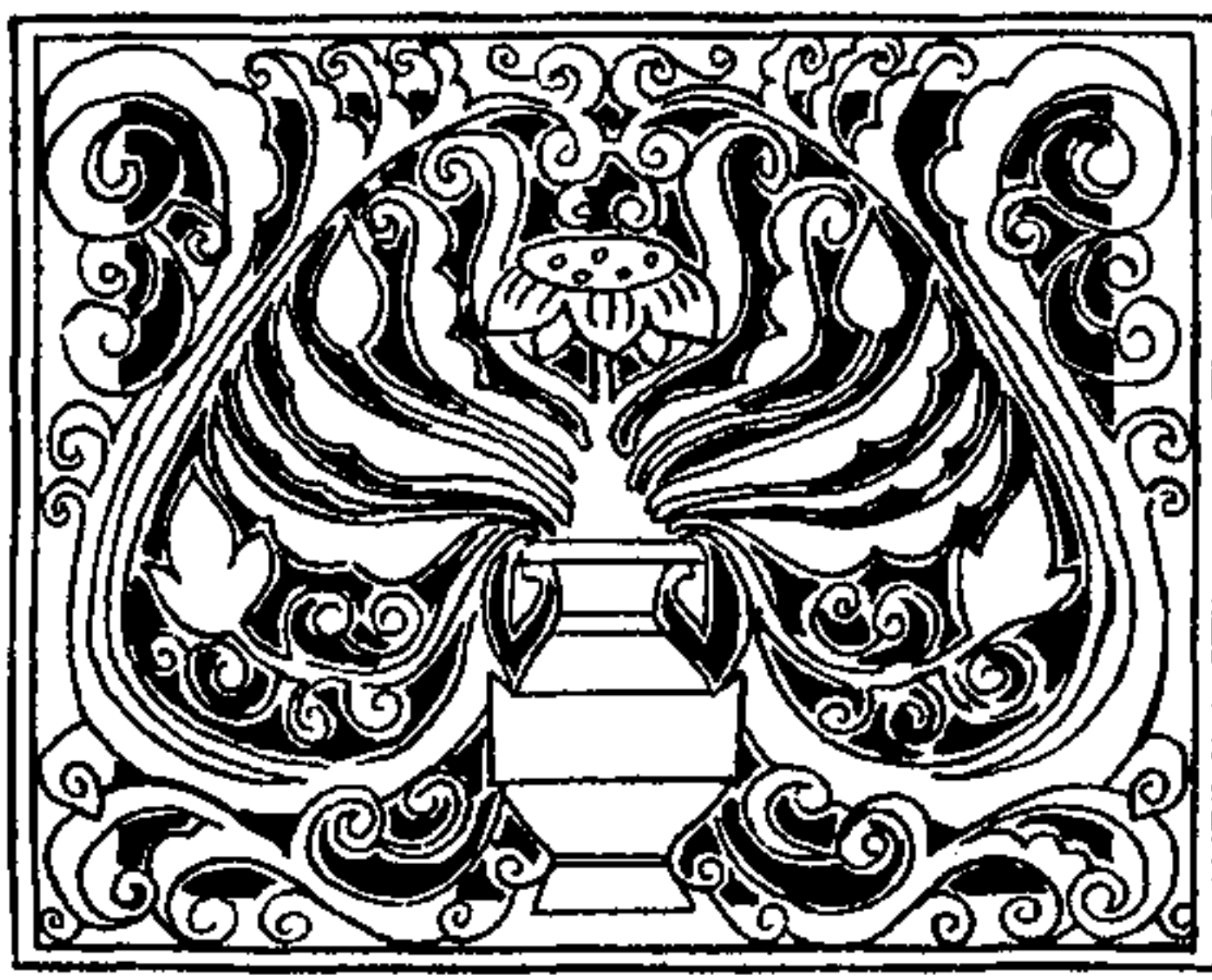




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

Editorial Office
P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh 262 524, U.P.

Publication Office
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014

Phone (91)(33)244 0898
(91)(33)245 2383
Fax (91)(33)245 0050



Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage) Annual Life (20 Years)

India Rs. 45 Rs. 500
Sri Lanka &
Bangladesh Rs. 120 Rs. 2000

U.S.A. & Canada
Air Mail \$ 20 \$ 300
Other Countries
Air Mail £ 15 £ 225

Cover: Rameswaram Temple
Inset : Indira Gandhi Road Bridge
(Pamban)

MARCH 1997

CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	 281
India on the World Map <i>Editorial</i>	 282
Mundaka-Upanishad <i>Swami Sridharananda</i>	 288
Happiness	 291
The Ladder of Love <i>Swami Chetanananda</i>	 294
Adventures of a Layman in the Realm of Vedanta <i>Tapobroto Bharadwaj</i>	 302
The Allusions of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses <i>Dr. N. Eakambaram</i>	 311
Bhagavad-Gita and Bhakti <i>Dr. P.V. Narayanaswamy</i>	 316

(Continued on next page)

CONTENTS (Contd.)

	Reviews and Notices 323
Youth Forum:	News and Reports 327
Synopsis of Question-Answer Sessions	
<i>Swami Nikhileswarananda</i> 320	Human Excellence 328

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 102

MARCH 1997

No. 3

Divine Wisdom

*REALIZATION OF THE DIVINE
(Sage Kapila to his mother Devahūti)*

सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि।
ईक्षेतानन्यभावेन भूतेष्विव तदात्मताम्॥

Just as all objects in the world are seen in their substantial nature as one with their material elements, so the same Atman should be seen as existing in all beings, and all beings as subsisting in the same Atman. Such is the wisdom of the man of enlightenment.

स्वयोनिषु यथा ज्योतिरेकं नाना प्रतीयते।
योनीनां गुणवैषम्यात्तथाऽऽत्मा प्रकृतौ स्थितः॥

Just as the one fire manifests as many according to the difference of the fuel in which it manifests, so also the one supreme

Spirit abiding in Prakriti manifests differently as innumerable centres of consciousness (Jivas).

तस्मादिमां स्वां प्रकृतिं दैवीं सदसदात्मिकाम्।
दुर्विभाव्यां पराभाव्य स्वरूपेणावतिष्ठते॥

Following the path of devotion described above, the Jiva regains union with the supreme Being, of whom he is a part (as a spark is of the fire), and overcomes the bondage of Prakriti, which is the Lord's own power of manifestation represented by the manifold world in its subtle and gross aspects, and which is difficult to overcome except by His grace.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.28.42-44

India on the World Map

In this month's editorial, we make the observation that as a contrast to other nations of the world, India still lives because she holds on to spirituality. Even at the depth of degradation, India was not dead but in a deep slumber from which Swamiji foresaw that she would awake once more to her real majestic stature. Swamiji also saw that India's time-honoured institutions needed neither change nor rejection. National awakening was to be effected through dissimulation of Vedantic ideas. Vedanta was the need of the hour to counter the wave of materialism sweeping over both the East and the West. It was through Vedantic method of worship of the spirit by the spirit that the four-fold gifts of food & clothing, of life, of secular education and of spiritual education were to be given to the sunken masses of India to raise them. Thus was India to regain her place on the world map.

Like drops of water on a red hot sizzling pan

Youth, wealth, lordship and lack of discrimination—each of these is a vanity. What can we say of the condition of people who possess all these? What to speak of the efforts of people who, lacking in discrimination and possessed of the vigour of youth, have made the pursuit of pleasures and acquisition of wealth and lordship their goals? Will they understand: vanity of vanities, all is vanity except taking the name of God and singing His glories?

Immersed in the pursuit of the senses lesser animals fall a victim to each of the five senses of knowledge:¹ The moth, out of love for the light, embraces death; the fish, listen-

ing to the murmur of the waters as it flows past the trap set for them, gets caught. Though there is a way for it to escape it does not even try. The bee cannot resist storing up the sweet honey and dies in the honeycomb; the musk deer, not knowing that the smell of the musk emanates from its own navel, runs hither and thither in search of it and meets its death; and the wild elephant in whom the sense of touch is keen is caught in the trap set for it lured by the tame female. What to speak of the human being in whose youthful days all these senses are vigorous, and who have at their disposal all the wealth to acquire every form of sense pleasure?

That the goal of human life is knowledge and knowledge alone and not the enjoyment of the pleasures of the senses, seems to such persons to be a statement of the frustrated. But such races as have devoted themselves to the pursuit of the science and technology, and made the enjoyment of the world the goal of human life, have decayed and vanished. Swamiji therefore observed that the children of the senses die; the children of Maya live forever. Quoting history Swamiji says:

There was a time when at the sound of the march of big Greek battalions the earth trembled. Vanished from off the face of the earth, with not even a tale left behind to tell, gone is that ancient land of the Greeks. There was a time when the Roman Eagle floated over everything worth having in this world; everywhere Rome's power was felt and pressed on the head of humanity; the earth trembled at the name of Rome. But the Capitoline Hill is a mass of ruins, the spider weaves

1. *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, Śloka 76.

its web where the Caesars ruled. There have been other nations equally glorious that have come and gone, living a few hours of exultant and exuberant dominance and of a wicked national life, and then vanishing like ripples on the face of the waters.²

Even in recent times great colonial powers arose. Britain practically ruled over the world. The British empire was one about which it used to be said that the sun never set. But today Britain occupies a small area. That is history. And India despite the many ups and downs, despite the plunder of foreigners, despite the cruelty meted out to her people by the foreign invaders and persecution by her own people, still survives and makes her presence felt. What is the secret behind India's immortality?

Not dead, but in a slumber

Describing the condition of India during his wandering days, Swamiji said that India was like a sleeping leviathan. In every sense of the term she appeared to be dead. Appeared to be dead, for the Swami could feel the feeble pulse of spirituality emanating from the people of the land. And returning from the West after his first visit there, and witnessing the huge ovation he received from the people of his motherland, the conviction got strengthened in him, and he spoke with inspiration:

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us..., gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze

from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep.³

It is in and through spirituality that Swamiji hoped to unite the disorganized mob that India then was, and he clearly saw that she was seated majestically as the queen of all nations.

*Achieving human excellence,
the Indian theme*

The Indian mind is peculiar. Unlike the Greek mind which began to explore the mysteries of external nature, and remained content to limit its field of exploration to the world outside, the Indian mind, though it began to understand the mysteries of external nature and did pretty well in that field too, soon turned the vision inward, and found greater and more rewarding findings in the domain of internal nature. Thus the Indian mind did excel in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, surgery, and construction of various types of structures which depended on a sound knowledge of geometry, and freely gave out of her fund of knowledge to the people of foreign lands when there was a scope for exchange of ideas. But her special forte was the spiritual domain and therein she found the source of all bliss and vitality. *The begging bowl and the voice of peace and blessing of the sannyasin is still the ideal of India.*

Human souls, during their journey through this earth in their many incarnations, make the various nations their homes, and believing themselves to be born with a nationality, identify themselves with the ideals of that particular nation. In and through these ideals they seek the meaning

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 3, p. 106. [Hereafter, CW].

3. CW, vol. 3, pp. 145-6.

of their lives. And in this sojourn they must come to India to attain liberation. Speaking on this Swamiji says, not without reason, that India is:

...the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality.⁴

Those human qualities which are the envy of any race, namely, mildness, forbearance, toleration, sympathy and brotherhood, are to be found in India. And these can be cultivated even by the people of other nations. But a training to stop the outgoing tendency of the mind and turning the vision inward is a task for a few bold and adventurous souls. This is the realm in which the Indian mind has for centuries spent her energies. That gave to India her vitality and stability. And it is on account of this again that India has been the land from which tidal waves of spirituality have been periodically deluging the world—not to drown the world in the deluge, but to put out the fire of materialism. And a revitalising of India's spirituality was also the method to raise the Indian people. Thus, the clear-sighted Swami saw that a spiritual upheaval is the crux to making India regain her place of honour among the nations of the world.

India's institutions

However, people with a gross vision—and there are many such—get dazzled by the glamour of the material affluence of the West which has been sweeping over India too. They will profit from an apparently trivial observation made by Swami Niranjanananda, long before becoming a monk. He then had in his possession some

psychic powers with which he could cure people. A wealthy man one day came to him to get relief from insomnia. In later days, the Swami would say that he was not quite sure to what extent the wealthy man benefited but that incident had filled him with a feeling of emptiness for everything the world had to offer.

To those drawn to materialistic glamour, everything that India has to offer now is bad. To them the institutions of India are all unfit and need to be rejected. The best way, according to them, is a blind imitation of the West. But can an ass in tiger's skin be called a tiger? In imitating the ideal of another nation, one loses in more than one way. First, having strayed from the national ideal, India as a nation would be dead. Again, accepting a foreign ideal would be an act of hypocrisy because there will be variance between the mental thought processes which would be Indian and the external observances which would be Western. The clear-sighted Swami urged such people to stick to the national inheritance, for these had been tested true for centuries. He said,

...the older I grow, the better I seem to think of these time-honoured institutions of India.... *for each of them is the embodiment of the experience of centuries.*⁵

However, there is a need for sympathetic understanding of these institutions. The ideal at the one end, Swamiji says, is the Brahmana, and the ideal at the other end is the Chandala. The ideal at one end is the Sannyasin, and at the other end is the householder. Both are great. The lifestyle of the Sannyasin and the householder are both based on service and renunciation. Though the highest ideal of a Hindu is Sannyasa, it need not be thrust on everyone. For there is a provision for one to gradually ascend to

4. CW, vol. 3, p. 105.

5. CW, vol. 3, pp. 132–3.

the stage of becoming a sannyasin.

...Every Hindu who has tasted the fruits of this world must give up in the latter part of his life,... We know that this is the ideal—to give up after seeing and experiencing the vanity of things.... But that ideal can only be realized after a certain amount of experience. We cannot teach the child the truth of renunciation; the child is a born optimist; his whole life is in his senses; his whole life is one mass of sense-enjoyment. So there are child-like men in every society who require a certain amount of experience, of enjoyment, to see through the vanity of it, and then renunciation will come to them. ...but unfortunately, in later times, there has been a tendency to bind every one down by the same laws as those by which the Sannyasin is bound, and that is a great mistake. But for that a good deal of the poverty and the misery that you see in India need not have been.... Let the poor fellow enjoy himself a little, and then he will raise himself up, and renunciation will come to him of itself.⁶

Thus Swami strongly felt that India's institutions were, in their plan and purpose, best suited to make human beings reach the goal. While desiring a spiritual upheaval for unifying India, Swami also encouraged a toned-down materialism.

Impact of Vedanta on the human psyche

Apparently India has nothing to offer to the nations of the world. Yet she survives to fulfil a mission. Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher said, 'In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.' On the value and influence of Indian culture, he continues, 'The world is

about to see a revolution in thought more extensive and more powerful than that which was witnessed by the Renaissance of Greek Literature.'⁷

It is the experience of many monks of the Ramakrishna Order and lay persons who have gone abroad that the West is eagerly looking forward to the message of the Vedanta. It is this which India has to offer. India's gift to the world is the light spiritual. The remedy which will cure the evils in Indian society is also the message of Vedanta. Thus Vedanta is the need of the hour for the whole world and its impact, already immense, will be even greater. Speaking on the great responsibility placed upon the head of each Indian Swamiji says:

We Hindus have now been placed, under God's providence, in a very critical and responsible position. The nations of the West are coming to us for spiritual help. *A great moral obligation rests on the sons of India to fully equip themselves for the work of enlightening the world on the problems of human existence.*⁸

What benefit accrues from the pursuit of spiritual knowledge? What has one to gain from the message of strength found in the Upanishads? What is so fascinating about the Vedanta? *Vedanta is a booster to a man who has lost faith in himself.* It makes us think that though we appear to be weak, yet we are *potentially* strong, omnipotent, and omniscient. In a world of differences between one man and another, each understands that all purity, gentleness, goodness, and the power of introspection are everyone's birthright; that some have yet to manifest it. We find in Vedanta the basis for morality, the power that makes us pierce the veil of ignorance, see the Self in ourselves

7. CW, vol. 3, p. 109.

8. CW, vol.3, p.139.

6. CW, vol. 3, p. 150.

and others and pour out our energies in the service of those around us. It gives us an insight into what life is about. It helps us to set our goals correctly so that life has some meaning.

Human progress is by the infilling of nature. There is no evolution in the Self which is changeless. All change is in Nature. What we mean by evolution of beings from the amoeba to the god-man is an attempt of the Infinite Self to express its infinitude through finite bodies, rejecting each when it finds it to be unsuitable and taking up a better form. In man, the Self gets the best body and finds even that to be insufficient to express the grandeur of Atman. These bodies that the Self takes up are like so many obstacles to manifest the infinitude of the Self, each succeeding one better suited than the former.

Thus by forming a better picture of what humanity is striving for, we can better formulate our methods to arrive at the goal. We see clearly that enjoyment of material comforts cannot be the goal, for neither is it lasting nor does it give unmixed happiness. Knowledge of one's real nature is the goal of mankind. The effect of Vedanta upon the thinking masses of people all over the world is expressed beautifully by Swamiji:

'...the immense change that has been produced in the tone, the procedure, in the methods, and in the literature of the world by this *slow, never-ceasing permeation of Indian thought*.' ...Slow and silent, as the gentle dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unheard yet producing a most tremendous result, has been the work of the calm, patient, all-suffering spiritual race upon the world of thought.⁹

As a contrast to self-seeking which results in competition and elbowing out of others for personal benefits, the interpersonal relation also becomes sublime. We no more talk merely of humane relations or of brotherhood but of *oneness*. When such a knowledge dawns in the minds of vast numbers of people in any part of the world, it conduces to the well-being of the society. Human beings then look upon each other as sparks of the divine and perform actions in a spirit of worship. Thus the message of Vedanta is needed both in India and abroad.

Duty to our motherland

How did Vedanta help in raising the masses of India? Swamiji said time and again, Renunciation and Service are the twin ideals before India which need to be intensified. For the sake of the family one must learn to give up one's own desires. For the sake of the village one must learn to sacrifice the needs of one's own family. And for the good of humanity no sacrifice is too great to make. Thus through sacrifice and service India must raise herself. The power to raise India must come from within her own shores and not from foreign nations. Every nation should raise itself by its own efforts. In what ways can one human being serve another? Man exists in different planes: the physical, the mental, the intellectual and the spiritual. He experiences a want in each of these planes. So every man can be served in one or more of these fields. It now depends upon one's own inclination and capability to serve. It also depends on the attitude he maintains while serving others.

The highest of gifts is the giving of spiritual knowledge, the next successively are the giving of secular knowledge, saving of life, and giving food, clothes and shelter. *The Indian tradition requires that these are done with a Vedantic base.* The Ramakrishna Movement, through its two wings the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission,

9. CW, vol. 3, pp. 109-10.

seeks to advance each human from where he or she is. The various Math centres concern themselves *mainly* with the dissemination of spiritual knowledge and providing a venue for spiritual practices. We find in them temples, libraries and lecture halls. Publication centres bring out books and/or journals. Some other Math/Mission centres bring out souvenirs, magazines or pamphlets. The schools and colleges run by the Mission, in cities, villages and in tribal areas, serve to remove the ignorance of students regarding secular matters. They are *also* venues where students are brought into contact with India's spiritual and cultural traditions. There are also institutes which cater to international needs and encourage scholars from abroad to visit India and study India, her people, history and rich tradition. There is also provision for imparting basic education to adults who did not have educational opportunities when they were young. The charitable dispensaries and the hospitals together with the institutes attached to them involve themselves in alleviating all kinds of human suffering. Through a variety of relief and rehabilitation programmes round the year, human beings who fall victim to the frowns of nature are served food, clothing and winter garments. Sometimes houses together with community centres for cultural development are also constructed. Some centres devote considerable energy for doing welfare to villagers from the grass-root level. Mass education is another aspect of

the Mission's activities.

And in performing all these acts of service it must not be looked upon as mere social work for the spirit behind these activities, as we have to remember always, is the spirit of worship—the worship of the Infinite by the Infinite. The watch-word, therefore, is:

...to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.¹⁰

Thus transcending all distinctions based on nationality, caste, creed, language, or sex, by seeing the divine in varied forms one should, keeping one's mind firmly fixed on the divine within, try to alleviate the misery of humanity perceived as divine. We have to find meaning for our life by seeing how best and in how many ways we can, keeping the proper attitude, give our best for raising humanity drawing inspiration from the activities of the two wings of the Ramakrishna Movement. □

10. CW, vol. 3, pp. 141–2.

...woe unto the man and woe unto the nation that forgets the real, internal and spiritual essentials of religion and mechanically clutches with death-like grasp at all external forms and never lets them go. The forms have value only so far as they are expression of the life within. If they have ceased to express life, crush them out without mercy.

—Swami Vivekananda

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

इष्टापूर्तं मन्यमाना वरिष्ठं
नान्यच्छ्रेयो वेदयन्ते प्रमूढाः।
नाकस्य पृष्ठे ते सुकृतेऽनुभूत्वे-
मं लोकं हीनतरं वा विशन्ति॥

*Iṣṭāpūrtam manyamānā varīṣṭam
nānyac-chreyo vedayante pramūḍhaḥ
Nākasya pṛṣṭhe te sukr̥te'nubhūtvē-
mam lokam hīnataram vā viśanti.*
(1.11.10.)

The greatly deluded fools, considering the sacrifices and the charitable works inculcated by the Vedas and the Smṛtis to be the highest thing, do not understand any other means (viz. that which leads to liberation) to be better. After having enjoyed in the heights of heaven (which is the abode of pleasure) the fruits of their good works, they re-enter this world or even lower ones.

This line of thought comes to a close with this *mantra*. Here it is further emphasized that persons who are intensely attached to activities and their results are totally confused, because their conscience tries to guide them according to the moral values inculcated by their teachers, parents, elders and the society, while their desire for certain objects of enjoyment stops them from being guided by their better self and pulls them another way. When desire gets the upper hand, it throws up a lot of arguments and reasons in justification to convince the conscience that it (desire) is legitimate and right, thus scheming to get the sanction of conscience. These confused people start arguing against their conscience, which tells them

what is proper and what is not proper, and, going against their conscience, become victims of their desires. Still, they believe that what they are doing is correct. This is how confusion arises, and it becomes total when desires get complete hold of a person.

The Upaniṣad highlights that the totally confused people are past praying for, because they argue that there is nothing better than their course. Desire to enjoy the fruits of good works in heaven is so strong in them that all corridors to access their reason are closed; they are not prepared to receive any new idea which may go counter to this desire. *Iṣṭāpūrta* implies all the rituals and charitable works mentioned in the Vedas and Smṛtis which go to build up an *adṛṣṭa* or *apūrvā*, the collection of the results of all *karma*. The Smṛti mentions various philanthropic activities (*pūrtam*) such as providing water to the thirsty, building hospitals and schools, etc. Though these philanthropic activities are not identical with Vedic sacrifices and rites (*iṣṭam*), they are nevertheless good for the community, and people usually undertake such works desiring their results. So, the Upaniṣad is in fact referring to the whole range of *sakāma-karma*, works performed with an eye on personal gain, such as *iṣṭam*, and *pūrtam*.; that is, all activities that are done with a desire for selfish results, paying great attention to their performance, with a conviction in the excellence of those results, thereby shutting oneself to other ideals.

What happens to such people? They enjoy in heaven (*nāka*) the fruits of good

works (*sukṛta*) they have done on earth. But there is an end to all created things, including the meritorious fruits of *karma*. For, according to the scriptures, heaven is a place where no fresh *karma* is possible but only enjoyment of the results of good *karma* done while on earth. So, after using up their *sukṛta* (fruits of good works), such people return to this world of ours or even go to the nether worlds. Those who return to this world have again to work out their destiny. They are given another chance to choose between *karma* and spiritual advancement.

Now the question is, why do some go down into the inferior worlds after their heavenly life? The answer is, the course of one's life after heaven is determined by one's past actions, good or bad, the result of which remain yet to be experienced. The scriptures say that one cannot escape reaping the fruits of one's actions. They cannot be destroyed; they are dissipated only by experiencing them. So, after enjoying in heaven, if one is due to reap the fruits of one's inhuman actions committed in some past life, then he is born in one of the sub-human domains. The results, both good and bad, of actions done in innumerable past lives of an individual are responsible for the endless variety of human character as also of the types of living beings. So, even a *karma-kāṇḍī*, after enjoying the results of his good deeds by way of pleasures in heaven, may find himself left with bad *saṃskāras*, impressions of past actions, which are uppermost within him when he is reborn. This is the logic behind the statement, *hīnataram vā viśanti*, in this *mantra*.

The teacher is thus warning us not to be carried away by the benefits of *karma-kāṇḍa*. That is neither the only way nor the best way to lead one's life. How objective and unbiased the Upaniṣad is! The teacher discloses the whole truth and hides nothing from his students. *Karma-kāṇḍa* gives only short term

returns for a life-long effort. Also, the *karma-kāṇḍī* is not aware that he has not taken hold of his whole personality, but only of a part of it with which he is working, and that his real enemy, the bad tendencies, remain submerged inside him ready to surface again when the time becomes ripe.

तपःश्रद्धे ये ह्युपवसन्त्यरण्ये

शान्ता विद्वांसो भैक्ष्यचर्या चरन्तः।

सूर्यद्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति

यत्रामृतः स पुरुषो ह्यव्ययात्मा॥

Tapas-śraddhe ye hy-upavasanty-aranye
śāntā vidvāṃso bhaikṣya-caryāṃ carantaḥ
Sūrya-dvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti
yatrāmṛtaḥ sa puruṣo hy-avyayātmā.
 (1.ii.11.)

These forest dwellers, who live on alms, who are of peaceful mind, austere and lead a life of faith (by meditation on Brahman with attributes), and resort to the duties of their stage of life with their senses under control, they, after being freed from all impurities, depart through the Path of the Sun (ut-tarāyaṇa) to where lives the immortal, imperishable and undecaying Puruṣa (At-man).

Here the teacher takes up another ideal and stage of life. People who find the result of *karma-kāṇḍa* unacceptable because of its shortcomings take up another attitude towards life—that of a *vānaprasthī*. Having seen and experienced life in the world, they now understand that it is foolish to expect anything in return, because all rewards and results come to an end sooner or later, and one remains caught in the cycle of birth and death. So, they choose to spend the rest of their lives in such a manner as to progress spiritually and not be reborn. This is the *upāsanā-mārga* (Path of contemplation on Brahman with attributes, *saguṇa*) of the *vānaprasthīs*.

A householder, after fulfilling his duties till he is about fifty years old, feels dissatisfied with the present trend of life. Besides, he finds that there is a gulf between himself and the younger generation. So, he wisely decides that it is time to withdraw from worldly affairs and let the younger generation take over the management of society and its problems. He retires to live in a forest (*vana*). But this does not free him from all duties and rules of conduct. Even as a *vānaprasthī*, he has certain obligations to fulfil, which too are enumerated in the scriptures. For instance, he must not save anything for himself for a rainy day. He is almost on a par with a *sannyāsin*, except in some important respects, as for example, in the subject and method of meditation. The latter has taken the decision that he will have nothing more to do with the game of ordinary life, and will spend the remaining days of his life as an introvert, under strict self-discipline, and solve the problem of repeated birth and death. The *vānaprasthī* follows many of the *sannyāsin*'s disciplines, but that is done after having lived for years as a householder.

The decision to retire from the world to become a monastic and live in pursuit of Self-knowledge may be taken after remaining in the world as a householder, or immediately after completing one's life as a *brahmacāri* (student). Further, even in the stage of a *vānaprasthī* one might perform the *virajā-homa* (a special rite) and become a *sannyāsi*. The moment one is convinced about the spiritual goal of life, one is at liberty to walk out of the householder or *vānaprasthī* stage of life.¹

1. 'Yadahareva virajet tadaharve pravrajat grhādvā vanātvā: One should embrace monasticism the very day one feels utterly dispassionate, be it from one's home (i.e. from the stage of a householder) or from the forest (i.e. from the stage of a forest-dweller).' *Jābāla Upaniṣad*, 4.

Consider people who reside in a forest, renouncing the worldly life of a householder. How are they to conduct and support themselves? The answer is, they should live on alms leading an austere life (*tapasyā*) full of faith (*śraddhā*).

So, apart from *karma-kāṇḍa*, two more ways of living have to be understood before we come to the subject of *parā-vidyā*. These two are also in the realm of *aparā-vidyā* and will not lead directly to emancipation from the cycle of birth and death. One is the way of *vānaprastha* and the other of *sannyāsa*, to which the *vānaprasthī* too finally resorts. *Karma-kāṇḍa* takes one to *svarga-bhoga*, the enjoyment of heavenly abodes; the *upāsanā-mārga* of the *vānaprasthī* and *sannyāsi* to *krama-mukti*, gradual emancipation after death. These two types of people, who are definitely one step ahead of the *karma-kāṇḍī*, do not get liberated immediately after death, but pass through various higher spiritual states till they reach *Satyaloḥa*, The World of Truth. This is not the highest Truth, but Truth as *Hiraṇyagarbha*. After remaining in this World or state till the present cycle of creation ends, they finally realize Brahman or Atman.

What are the other characteristics of the *vānaprasthī*? They are *śānta*: the hold of desires of the world has ended for them. They are intensely meditative and not bothered by worldly loss or gain. The greatest temptations of the world leave them unmoved, unable to create any ripples in their mind. The *vānaprasthīs* see the interactions in society but do not allow any of the six 'enemies' (*ṣaḍ-ripu*, passion, anger, greed, etc.) to vitiate their mind. They are also *vidvāṃsah*, wise, having gone to the root of temporal matters. It is not that they are ignorant about worldly matters; on the contrary, they are well-versed in everything. Though exposed to all the things of the world, they remain

(Continued on page 301)

Happiness

To be happy, to possess eternal life, to be in God, to be saved—all these are the same. All alike mean the solution of the problem, the aim of existence.... Happiness has no limits because God has neither bottom nor bounds, and because happiness is nothing but the conquest of God through love.

The beautiful scene on the Jamuna*... did not close with the resuscitation of the calf. Janaki's\$ words raised new topics and gave an altogether new turn to the general conversation of the confreres. The first to speak after the calf arose was Gopi Maitreyi.

She said, 'Krishna, sister Janaki's words have created a doubt in me. She stated that happiness is the end which all alike seek. Is not that a low and unworthy aim in a world where misery stares us in the face all around? Had not rather charity and love be set up as the ideal? You alone are worthy to clear this doubt of mine; so enlighten me, O Krishna.'

'Maitreyi, my love,' said Krishna, 'A certain child was weeping; it could not say, it did not itself exactly know what it wanted. It wanted something and cried. It was offered a doll; it turned it over and over for a while, but soon cast it away. Then a fruit was

offered to it; it ate a little bit of it and then threw it away in anger. Then a picture was tried, then a book, then a toy, but the child did not get composed until it had what it sought. Like that child, you too do not know what you really want and try one thing after another, but your mind can never rest unless it obtains what it really seeks—permanent and all-knowing bliss. You cannot help seeking this eternal bliss, this great Self, any more than a stone thrown up can help falling

True and permanent happiness is only possible, when the hunt after external things is given up as futile and the mind subsides.

towards the earth. Everything in the universe is constantly gravitating towards it consciously or unconsciously. All other things will please for a time and then will be thrown away. How many things have you not yourself tried within these few years and thrown away? Do you not remember, that once on these very sands, you desired me to get your jewels made like the wild flowers of the forest and put into them their smell too? I complied with your request, but in a few months you got tired of them. Now you want to exercise charity and love and help the world—a much nobler and a more unselfish desire than your former one. But in both, the end sought for is happiness, for desire means want, insufficiency of happiness; and you will feel miserable unless you are allowed to help the world. Like the child I spoke of, you have not yet understood what you seek. The thief who steals, the ruffian who murders, the soldier who falls

* See 'The Object of Vedanta', *Prabuddha Bharata*, vol. 1, no. 1, July, 1896, p. 5; rpt., vol. 99, no. 8, August 1994, p. 332.

\$ On suggestion, that the mixing up of Rukhmani and Satyabhama with the Gopies is not proper, we have substituted the names with Janaki and Savitri respectively.

without a murmur on the field of battle, the patriot who loves his country more than his home, the lover who is busy weaving love songs—all alike seek happiness only, but in extremely different things. The end is the same, the means differ, some being good, some bad, others indifferent. But you may be sure of this that no external thing can ever give you what you seek. True and permanent happiness is only possible, when the hunt after external things is given up as futile and the mind subsides.

Maitreyi was satisfied with the reply, but Gopi Gargi asked, 'Is it not selfish, O Krishna, to seek this happiness which you yourself call the self?'

'No, my dear,' replied Krishna, 'The happiness I speak of is all-happiness, all-knowledge, all-permanence; it is infinite. Do you think that that infinite bliss is immured in what you call 'yourself' and 'myself'? The ocean is more easily swallowed up by one of its droplets, the universe is more readily devoured by the atom, than the great, boundless, unconditioned and eternal bliss called the Self is crammed up within your little frame. 'Yourself' and 'myself' denote little, exclusive, differentiated and narrow things; for what is 'yourself' is not 'myself', and what is 'myself' is not 'yourself'. You call your mind and body 'yourself'; but all notions of your being a body, an external thing, and all the wild goose chase of your mind must cease before the happiness of the Self can be realized. So long as you think yourself as apart from others, you are little and this infinite happiness cannot be realized. Give up your little self and the great Self stands revealed. Selfishness is the worst enemy to this high realization. It limits one's vision, makes one little, reduces one to a worm and how then could the infinite Self be perceived? The higher you rise out of the *pātāla* (dark, nether world) of your little self, the nearer you are to the heaven of the su-

preme Self. Charity and love to others will gradually lift you out of that *pātāla*. So train yourself that you may love others better than you. Sink your little self in the great ocean of love, wear it away to nothingness by constant exercise of charity and, when by this holy exercise the little self is rubbed away, the great Self stands realized. Love is a precious balm, a sovereign cure for the wound of selfishness. It polishes your heart, baptizes your understanding and purifies your whole nature. It transforms the beast into the man and the man into God. Nothing is dearer to God than love. When all yourself

Love is a precious balm, a sovereign cure for the wound of selfishness. It polishes your heart, baptizes your understanding and purifies your whole nature. It transforms the beast into the man and the man into God. Nothing is dearer to God than love.

is lost, when you become all love, then the highest enjoyment is at hand. Happiness therefore is identical with all love.'

'Oh, I have made a wonderful discovery, O Krishna,' cried Sita.

'If so, let us have it,' said Krishna, 'and see how wonderful it is.'

'My discovery is,' replied Sita, 'that happiness is not merely all-love, it is all-knowledge, for where there is the least thing yet to be known, the mind gets into unrest and happiness become imperfect.'

'You are right my dear, you are right. Ah! what a grand discovery and who else could have made it!' exclaimed Krishna.

'Is not this happiness then identical with pleasure?' asked Savitri in a serious tone.

'They are as fire and water, as light and darkness. The one is all knowledge, the other is all ignorance. A certain poor man begged for bread all day long, but did not get enough. So he grieved within himself and was going home, when suddenly on his way, he perceived a bright thing shining like silver; he was rejoiced at its very sight and eagerly took it in his hand, but to his misfortune, he found it was not silver but mother-o'-pearl. The poor man's grief knew no bounds; he cursed his fate and went home more sorrowful than before. Man's lot on earth is exactly similar; he wants happiness, firmly believes that a certain thing could give it, longs for it, gets it and is pleased; but his pleasure is closely followed by pain, for

involves the killing of the self; pleasure is derived from external things and is dependent on them; happiness is beyond external things, beyond the body and the mind and is independent. Dear Savitri, the two things should never be confounded.'

'Ah! what a splendid evening we have spent and how much have you taught us, O Krishna!' exclaimed the sweet Radha, 'All things in the universe are consciously or unconsciously seeking happiness, but in the majority of cases, it is sought for in external things; and want, pleasure and pain are the result. The mind which carries on the trade with the external world must "close its shop" before happiness can be realized.

Pleasure then is counterfeit for happiness—the illusion of happiness in a thing which cannot give it, like that of silver in mother-o'-pearl. It is deceptive and fleeting and is bounded on one side by want, and on the other by pain. Never confound happiness with pleasure. Pleasure tickles the mind and passes away, happiness is permanent and beyond the mind...; pleasure is deceptive, happiness is true; pleasure is the child of ignorance and illusion, happiness is all knowledge; pleasure is selfish and feeds selfishness; happiness is all-love and involves the killing of the self; pleasure is derived from external things and is dependent on them; happiness is beyond external things, beyond the body and the mind and is independent.

he soon finds he was deceived, that the thing he got does not give him the happiness he looked for in it; so another thing is tried, then another and so on. Pleasure then is counterfeit for happiness—the illusion of happiness in a thing which cannot give it, like that of silver in mother-o'-pearl. It is deceptive and fleeting and is bounded on one side by want, and on the other by pain. Never confound happiness with pleasure. Pleasure tickles the mind and passes away, happiness is permanent and beyond the mind—the mind must subside before it can be realized; pleasure is deceptive, happiness is true; pleasure is the child of ignorance and illusion, happiness is all knowledge; pleasure is selfish and feeds selfishness; happiness is all-love and

Happiness therefore is beyond the intellect, beyond all sensation, beyond what is known as 'yourself' and 'myself', is permanent, eternal, infinite, all-knowing, all-loving, all-truthful, all-independent, and is the great Self, the Atman—nay, it is you my sweet, precious, loving and artful Krishna.' 'I see,' ejaculated Krishna, 'I see you have all become philosophers; henceforth I cannot control you, so I go,' and accordingly he put his flute to his lips singing, 'so I go so—I—go, the merry shepherd goes,' began to walk forth, and the beautiful gopies one and all of them went merrily running after him followed by the calf which knew not how to walk but danced and jumped. □

The Ladder of Love

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Bhakti is the essence of spiritual life. All religions stress that one should develop love of God and that there are various levels of bhakti. An ordinary soul may aspire to lower expressions of bhakti while persons belonging to an especial category experience the highest forms of ecstatic love of God, even a mere reading of which inspires ordinary souls to make renewed attempts to pour one's heart and soul in surrender to the divine. In this article Swami Chetananda, the Spiritual Leader of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, places before readers the rungs of the ladder of love.

Nowadays the word 'love' is overused. In the West, many people repeat 'I love you,' 'I miss you,' like a *mantram*. But very few people can fathom the real nature of love. There is a saying, 'Expression killeth.' It is not always necessary to speak glibly about love, thus cheapening it. Once a young monk said to Swami Brahmananda: 'Maharaj, you love us so much.' The swami replied: 'If you know I love you, what type of love is that? Our love is so deep that we don't let you know how much we love you.'

God loves us, but He never comes and tells us. Without His love, we could not survive in this world. He arranges the milk in the mother's body before we are born. Who gives us the air to breathe, the water to drink, the light to see? God. But we are ungrateful and never feel that He loves us. In fact, we hardly love Him; we love His maya—and that is the reason we suffer. We pray to God to fulfil our desires and if they are not fulfilled we blame Him and do not trust Him. We want to use God for our selfish motives. Regarding the purpose of human life, a mystic said that God created us so that we could love Him.

God is love personified. Where love is, there God is. The *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* tells us: 'The Self-Existent is the essence of all felicity (*raso vai saḥ*). Who could live, who could

breathe, if that blissful Self dwelt not within the lotus of the heart? He it is that gives joy.' The *rasa* or the essence of bliss is sustaining all beings, so it is indispensable in our lives. It is like cement. If one sets brick upon brick without mortar, the bricks will soon collapse. Similarly, love acts as mortar; without it our personal life, family life, social life will fall apart.

Swami Vivekananda explained love by comparing it to a triangle whose three sides join together to form the whole. The first angle of the love triangle is: Love knows no bargaining. To say, 'I shall give you a million dollars if you will love me,' does not work. Love cannot be bought like an item in the supermarket.

The second angle is: Love knows no fear. Where there is fear, there cannot be any love. You can put a gun to someone's chest and say, 'Do you love me?' And that person out of fear may say, 'Yes, yes, I love you.' But that would not be the truth. Love cannot be forced. It springs spontaneously.

The third angle of the love triangle is: Love for love's sake. In true love, there is no selfish expectation. People love the beautiful moon for its sake. Nobody expects that the beloved moon will dine with him or sleep with him, or go on a honeymoon with him.

As the Mississippi River flows continuously towards its goal—the Gulf of Mexico, so the love of a lover flows towards his or her beloved—God. A real lover cannot resist this attraction of the great magnet—God.

Today human beings are hungry for love. Some years ago an old monk remarked: 'You see, love is everywhere but still people complain that no one loves them. Look at that peach tree. It loves us. It is there all the year round—in heat and cold, in snow and rain, in sun and storm. It forbears everything. When the summer season comes, it gives us fruits. It does not eat its own fruit. I see that love is everywhere.'

To experience this love we need a deep feeling and understanding. When we get up in the morning, the toothpaste and brush tell us: 'We love you. Please brush your teeth.' The clothes tell us: 'Use us and protect yourself from freezing cold. We love you.' At the breakfast table, the cereal, bread, and tea tell us: 'Eat us and get your energy. We love you.' When we work, all tools and machines help us to carry out our respective duties. At night, our beds tell us: 'We love you. Please have a good night's sleep.' We realize this cosmic love only when we attune ourselves with God.

It is almost impossible to define love. Rupa Goswami, a disciple of Chaitanya and a great mystic mentioned in his *Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu*: 'One's own natural affection for one's Chosen Ideal will mature into extreme love: the absorbed state of mind then noticeable is called bhakti, and its essence is love.' As a particular colour pervades melted paraffin, so uninterrupted thought of God saturates the mind. This state of mind is called devotion.

In short, love for God is called devotion, and love for sense pleasures is lust. Attachment for God releases a soul; attach-

ment for worldly objects binds a soul. The same force, the same power, the same energy manifests in different ways. The natural tendency of the human mind is to be attached to the world. The path of love or devotion shifts that attachment from the world to God.

Devotion or bhakti is of two kinds: *Vaidhī* bhakti, preparatory devotion, and *Parā* bhakti, supreme devotion. In the initial stage an aspirant cultivates devotion by practising japam and meditation according to the instructions of one's guru, listening to and singing about the glories of God, serving and worshipping the Lord, studying devotional scriptures and the lives of mystics, and also visiting holy places and associating with holy persons. As long as a person does not have supreme love for God, the practice of preparatory devotion is necessary. When supreme devotion dawns, the aspirant forgets body consciousness and surroundings. Out of ecstasy, he smiles, cries, dances, and sometimes loses outer consciousness. He attains peace and bliss and remains in a God-intoxicated state all through his life.

Girish Chandra Ghosh, an actor, playwright, and bohemian disciple of Ramakrishna, is a perfect example of a person who had supreme love for God. Once he said, referring to the Master: 'I find that it is not difficult to obey him, love him, or worship him. But indeed it is difficult to forget him.' When God possesses a soul, it is hard for that person to forget God. This constant recollectedness of God is the outcome of supreme devotion.

The devotional school of Vedanta reached its zenith during the time of Chaitanya (1486 to 1533), who is considered to be an incarnation of love. He founded a school of philosophy called *Acintya-bhedābheda* (incomprehensible dualistic monism), which means an inscrutable relation of difference

in nondifference. Sometimes a person is one with God and sometimes separate from God. For example, a wave arises in one part of the sea and subsides in another part. As water both the wave and the sea are identical; but they are different in respect to depth, vastness, and underwater sea life.

Chaitanya had quite a few disciples, but Rupa Goswami was a prominent one who wrote many valuable books elaborating his guru's philosophy. He was originally a minister of a Muslim king. One dark and stormy night the king summoned him for a consultation. Accompanied by bodyguards, Rupa was carried to the king in a palanquin. The road was inundated with water, and on both sides of it were the king's servants' quarters. Sitting in the palanquin, Rupa overheard a conversation of a couple. The husband said, 'I hear some noise in the street. Who is travelling in this awful foul weather?' The wife answered: 'It must be a dog, or a thief, or a king's slave. Because no one else would dare to go out on such a terrible night.' The husband looked out through the window and saw Rupa in the palanquin. He said, 'Oh, it is not a dog or a thief; it is one of the king's wretched slaves going to the palace.' This remark changed Rupa's life. He went to the king and submitted his resignation from ministership. He renounced his hearth and home and became a disciple of Chaitanya.

As a person needs a ladder to climb to the roof of a house, so a person should move step by step to reach the goal. In his famous book *Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu*, Rupa Goswami described the ladder of love as having nine steps, each one necessary in order to reach God: *śraddhā* (faith), *sādhusaṅga* (holy company), *bhajana kriyā* (spiritual disciplines), *anartha-nivṛtti* (cessation of obstacles), *niṣṭhā* (steadfastness), *ruci* (taste or relish), *āśakti* (attachment), *bhāva* (spiritual mood), and *prema* (supreme love).

Śraddhā, the first step on the ladder of love, is difficult to describe because there is no synonymous word in the English language. *Śraddhā* not only means faith, but sincerity, love, strength and bravery. Krishna mentioned in the Gita, 'A man is made of his faith; what his faith is, that verily he is.' It is the essence of spiritual life.

Real faith comes from experience. We have faith in the pilot, so we fly by plane; we have faith in the cook of the restaurant, so we eat there; we have faith in the surgeon, so we allow that doctor to perform surgery on us. We have faith in dollar bills and their purchasing power; otherwise they would be nothing but paper. Truly we cannot function in this world without faith. Krishna says in the Gita, 'A doubtful soul perishes.'

A patch of thin cloud floats in space and has very little strength; but when many small pieces of cloud join together and form a vast dense cloud, the result is a tornado which uproots trees, destroys homes and causes havoc. Similarly, *śraddhā* or intense faith generates tremendous power that can transform life very quickly. When all virtues accumulate in the life of a yogi, according to Patanjali, he attains samadhi, which is called *dharma-megha* (the cloud of virtue). In the Bible, Christ mentioned the power of faith: 'If you have the faith of a grain of mustard seed and ask the mountain to move, it will move.'

The second step of the ladder of love is holy company. The scriptures say: 'It is the medicine of worldly diseases.' When you see that your mind is very restless and you are unable to control it by japam or meditation or study, have the company of the holy. It works instantly. If you go to a perfume shop, the fragrance will penetrate into your nostrils, whether you like it or not. Similarly, holy company is so powerful that it will penetrate inside you and will lift your mind

to a higher plane of consciousness.

Holy company is called *sat-saṅga* in Sanskrit. *Sat* means existence or holy, and *saṅga* means association. It actually means having the company of that *Sat* or Eternal Existence (Brahman) who is within you. It is difficult because our minds are not sufficiently pure. So the second alternative is the association of holy people in external life. How to recognize a holy person? Swami Turiyananda said: 'He is a real holy man whose association awakens divine feelings.' There is a saying in the scriptures: 'When the sun rises, it looks red. When the sun sets, it also looks red. The sun always remains the same and is never devoid of light.' Similarly, a holy person, in times of trials and tribulations or in times of prosperity, is always the same. He maintains equanimity of the mind; he is always peaceful and blissful, and he carries the message of the Lord.

In the beginning of a spiritual journey, one should avoid evil company. Evil company drags the mind down; holy company carries one to divine fragrance. Narada says: 'It is hard to obtain the grace of a great soul because it is difficult for us to recognize such a person, but if a man receives the grace of that soul its effect is infallible.' Swami Brahmananda remarked: 'A bumble-bee hiding in a fragrant flower offered in the worship touches the feet of the Lord. Similarly, by the grace and association of a holy man, one attains liberation.'

The third step of the ladder is *bhajana kriyā*, or practising spiritual disciplines. Patanjali calls it *kriyā yoga*. It consists of performing austerities, studying the scriptures, chanting the name of the Lord, praying, meditating and having devotion for God. Rupa Goswami says that a devotee destroys evil tendencies with the help of spiritual discipline; then the mind becomes purified, and that purified mind will lead that person

to samadhi, the goal of spiritual life. One cannot reach this level as long as evil propensities function in the mind.

Chaitanya succinctly told Raghunath Goswami how to practise *sādhana*: 'Don't talk or hear about worldly things. Don't seek good or fancy clothing. Be humble. Always chant the name of the Lord. Live in Vrindaban (a holy place) and serve the Lord.'

The Vaishnava tradition of Chaitanya mentioned sixty-four means for practising *vaidhī bhakti* or preparatory devotion, such as, acceptance of a guru, initiation, japam, meditation, worship, service, singing, fasting, eating prasada, observing festivals, studying the devotional scriptures, living in a holy place, having holy company, visiting the deities in the temples, serving the devotees of God, cleaning the temples, practising humility, and so on. This tradition says: 'In this kali yuga, chanting the Lord's name is the only way to attain realization, (*Harernāma harernāmaiva kevalam, Kalau nāstyeva gatiranyathā*).'

It is not out of place to mention an episode which shows how *bhajana-kriyā* worked in Swami Yogananda's life. One day he found Sri Ramakrishna alone and asked him, 'Sir, could you teach me how to conquer lust?' 'Chant the name of Hari [Lord], then it will go away,' answered the Master. This simple remedy did not convince Jogin (later, Yogananda). He thought that the Master did not know any practical method and had prescribed something useless. 'Moreover,' he thought, 'so many people are repeating the name of Hari. Why does lust not vanish from them?'

The next day Jogin went straight to a hathayogi who was staying in the Panchavati, and while he sat listening to the yogi, Sri Ramakrishna arrived. The Master

took Jogin's hand and asked Jogin to follow him. While they were walking towards his room, Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Why did you go there? Don't do that. Your mind will only stick to the body if you learn those techniques of hathayoga. It will not thirst after God.'

Jogin again doubted Sri Ramakrishna. He thought that the Master had discouraged him from visiting the hathayogi to keep him from running away. However, he thought again: 'Why don't I do what he told me to do and see what happens?' Later Jogin said: 'Thinking thus, I took the name of Hari with a concentrated mind. And as a matter of fact, shortly afterwards I began to experience the tangible result mentioned by the Master.'

This *bhajana kriyā*, or the spiritual disciplines, subdue the evil propensities of the mind and thus the aspirant reaches the fourth stage, which is called *anartha nivṛtti*, or cessation of obstacles. Of course there is no end of struggle in spiritual life. This stage is like a little rest after winning the first battle.

Sri Ramakrishna mentioned the effects of *bhajana kriyā* on himself: 'At the time of performing Sandhya and worship, I used to think, according to scriptural prescription, that the Papa-purusha [evil spirit] within had been burnt up. Who knew then that there was actually a Papa-purusha within the body and that it could be actually burnt and destroyed? A burning sensation came on the body from the beginning of sadhana. I thought, "What is this disease?" It increased by degrees and became unbearable. Various kinds of oils prescribed by physicians were used; but it could by no means be alleviated. One day, while I was sitting in the Panchavati, I saw that a jet-black person with red eyes and a hideous appearance came reeling, as if drunk, out of this (showing his own body) and walked before me. I

saw again another person of placid mien in ochre-coloured dress, with a trident in his hand similarly coming out of my body. He vehemently attacked the other and killed him. The burning sensation in the body decreased for a short time after I had that vision. I suffered from that burning sensation continually for six months before the Papa-purusha was burnt up.'

The same was true in the lives of Christ and Buddha: Christ was tempted by Satan, and Buddha was tempted by Mara. These evil forces came not from an outer source, but from within their own minds. The yogis experience that the more a person practises tapas or austerity, the more his psycho-physical system generates heat, which clears up evil tendencies and makes a person pure.

The fifth step is *niṣṭhā*, or steadfast devotion. A husband wants a steady wife; a wife wants a steady husband; a disciple wants a steady guru; a guru wants a steady disciple; no one wants to be around someone who is unsteady, undependable and unpredictable. The Atman alone is steady and unchanging reality; whereas the universe and the beings which are the products of maya are always changing and therefore unsteady. The more a person touches the Atman, the more he becomes steady.

Swami Brahmananda said: 'Always practise your disciplines with unswerving steadfastness and let not a single day pass without them. Whether you like it or not, sit down at the appointed hour every day. If you can continue your practices for three years with unerring regularity, I assure you that the love for God will grow in you and you will feel yourself nearer to him.'

There is a Sufi story: Hafez, a famous mystic, fell in love with a courtesan. The girl wanted to entertain him and told him to meet her in the evening. When evening

came, the courtesan sent one of her attendants to light a candle in his room. Seeing that candle, Hafez remembered that for the last thirty years, without a break, he had lighted a candle in the mosque in the evening, and today for the girl, for his personal enjoyment, he was about to neglect his duty. He immediately left the room, went to the mosque and lighted a candle. The steadfast devotion that he had practised for thirty years saved his spiritual life.

The sixth step is relish. People sometimes say that spiritual life is tasteless and dry. This shows that they are not sincere. We often try to understand God with our brains, but we do not love one another with our brains; we need to use our hearts. When our hearts and our minds are united, we get the taste for God. If we get a little spiritual experience, the journey becomes smooth and easy; otherwise, spiritual life can be very tedious. For example, when a person swallows a piece of cheesecake without keeping it for a while on the tongue, he will not get the taste. To get the taste, one will have to bite and chew the cheesecake, then the taste buds will relish that food.

To get taste in spiritual life is very important. Sri Ramakrishna suggested the following method: 'Just as cows eat their fill, become free from anxiety, and then resting in one place, chew the cud; so after one has visited temples and holy places, one should sit in a secluded place, and ruminate over and get absorbed in those holy thoughts that occurred to one in these sacred places. Immediately after visiting them, one should not put one's mind to the sense objects. For, in that case, those godly thoughts cannot produce permanent results on the mind.'

In his famous book *Vidagdha Madhava*, Rupa Goswami described how chanting the name of God can produce taste: When this duo-syllabic mantram—Kri-shna—vibrates

on my tongue, it is like an expert dancer dancing rapidly on her toes. When this mantram vibrates on my tongue, I wish that I had millions of tongues so that I could taste God's name millions of ways. And when this mantram comes to my ears, my ears vibrate and I wish that I had millions of ears. When the same mantram vibrates on my mind, all my senses become silent; I feel so much joy I cannot hold it. I really do not know what nectar there is in the name of Krishna.

Taste comes. Vedanta is a little difficult to understand at first. It can be compared to eating a coconut. First you have to break the shell, then eat the flesh, and finally you will get the sweet milk.

The seventh step of the ladder is attachment. We all know what attachment is, and that its result is pain. Attachment for worldly objects creates pain, and on the other hand, attachment for God gives us peace and bliss. Sage Shandilya says, '*Sā para-anurakti Īśvare*—Devotion is supreme attachment for God.' There is a prayer by Prahlada: 'May I think of Thee with that strong love which the ignorant cherish for the things of the world, and may that love never cease to abide in my heart.'

We sometimes say, 'Hold on to God.' What does that mean? It means that love is reciprocal. If you love, you will be loved. If you embrace your beloved, your beloved will embrace in return. Similarly, if you hold onto God, God will hold you; the Holy Ghost will descend, and all the divine qualities will enter inside you.

Even attachment for heaven is bondage. Those who try to go to heaven want celestial enjoyment. They may go to heaven, but when the result of their virtuous deeds is over, they will have to come back again to this world. It is just like having money in the

bank; you spend it bit by bit until it is gone.

There is a story about a Sufi saint who took a bamboo pole and set both ends afire. He then began to dance rotating the pole. People asked, 'Sir, what are you doing with this blazing fire?'

The saint replied, 'With one end of this pole, I am going to burn heaven, and with the other end I am going to burn hell.'

'Why?'

'So that people will not try to go to either place.'

'Then where will they go?'

'They should go to God.'

Bhāva, spiritual mood or ecstasy, is the eighth step of the ladder. In this stage, a devotee loves to be alone and wants to spend long hours in meditation. His desire for food, drink or any kind of comfort diminishes. He has almost constant recollectedness of God. Chaitanya described the mood in this way:

Ah, how I long for the day when in
chanting Thy name the tears
will spill down from my eyes,
and my throat will refuse to utter
its prayers, choking and stammering
with ecstasy, when all the hairs of
my body will stand erect with joy.

Ah, how I long for the day when an
instant of separation from Thee,
O Govinda, will be as a thousand
years; when my heart burns away
with its desire and the world
without Thee is a heartless void.

That is *bhāva*. It is a kind of drunkenness. If you drink too much liquor you lose control over your senses. Similarly, if a devotee drinks too much of this divine nectar, he has no control; sometimes he is calm and quiet, and sometimes he laughs and cries. In this state, the aspirant is almost devoid of body-consciousness.

Once Radha, the spiritual consort of Krishna, went to see Krishna near the Govardhan Hill. The path was stony and she was barefoot. The stones in the summer in Vrindaban are like red-hot iron. Radha's feet were full of blisters, but she had no body-consciousness. She never felt the pain because of her exuberant love for her beloved Krishna.

The ninth and final step of the ladder of love is *prema*, or supreme love. Having reached this point, the aspirant's climb is complete, and he stands with both feet on the roof. At that time, love, lover and beloved become one. In Christianity, it is called Divine Communion, in Buddhism, Satori, and in Hinduism, Samadhi. Except for some *Īśvarakoṭis* (godlike souls) or divine incarnations, it is very difficult for ordinary human beings to experience this highest love.

Once Chaitanya wanted to evaluate his spiritual experiences from the scriptural point of view, so he asked his learned disciple Ramananda to describe the various levels of mystical experiences. Hearing about each level, Chaitanya said, 'I experienced that, tell me more.' At last when Ramananda began to explain '*prema-vilāsa-vivarta*,' where the idea of duality dissolves and the lover and the beloved become one in love, Chaitanya was so overwhelmed with devotion that he passed his hand over Ramananda's mouth and said, 'Don't speak further, otherwise, my body will not last.'

According to Vaishnava tradition, *Prema-vilāsa-vivarta* 'indicates a type of love which is capable of inducing simultaneously the joy of union and the pang of separation; with complete oblivion to selves and surroundings; and imbuing the lovers with a sense of identity to each other.' In this state the idea of male and female disappear, as well as the idea of division. This is the highest love.

In his famous drama, *Vidagdha Madhava*, Rupa Goswami described a beautiful scene about Radha's love for Krishna. Once she could not bear the pang of separation from her beloved Krishna, so she decided to take away her life. She went with her friend Vishakha to take a bath in the river Jamuna, and planned to drown herself. She wanted to see Krishna's face once more before death, so Radha asked Vishakha, 'Do you have a picture of Krishna?' Vishakha said, 'Yes, but

I did not bring it with me; it is at home.' Radha was disappointed. She sat down and began to visualize the face of her beloved Krishna in meditation. The moment she closed her eyes, Krishna, the all-knowing God, appeared and stood in front of her. Vishakha said to Radha, 'Friend, your Beloved is here. Open your eyes and see Him.' Radha opened her eyes and saw Krishna. It is the power of love that brings the beloved close to the lover. □

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

(Continued from page 290)

uninvolved. They know everything that goes on in the world, but are not disturbed or tempted. The *vidvāṁsaḥ*, wise ones, know the *śaḍ-ripu*, have wrestled with them, and at last seen through them, sublimated and risen above them, not suppressed them.

The *śānta* and the *vidvān* do not acquire or possess wealth, things, power, position, or authority for their security or livelihood. Having realized that the sense of security that depends on transient things of the world is really hollow, the *vānaprasthīs* depend only on alms, *bhāikṣya-carya*. The main principle of their life is non-acquisitiveness. That is why they cut down their requirements to the minimum. They represent an institution of *tyāga* (renunciation) and *vairāgya* (dispassion), conveying to society the message of self-denial so that householders may see that there is another way of life leading to another goal.

These *vānaprasthīs* or *sannyāsis* depart from this world by the Path of the Sun, during the six months of *uttarāyaṇa*, northern solstice. They go and merge with the Source of this cosmos, the immortal Puruṣa. This Source is the first manifest Being, the Hiraṇyagarbha. The forest-dwellers qualify to merge with the first manifestation of Brahman, but they do not go beyond the domain of *nāma-rūpa*, name-form and attributes, beyond the domain of space-time-causation.

Thus, there are three ways of life. A thoughtful and discriminating person has to choose for himself one from among these. Still, none of them lead straight to the highest. Now, we must find an answer to the question, What is that by which this cycle of repeated birth and death is got rid of altogether?

(to be continued)

Adventures of a Layman in the Realm of Vedanta

TAPOBROTO BHARADWAJ

Sri Tapobroto Bharadwaj of Calcutta, who is also a subscriber to the Prabuddha Bharata, presents in this illuminating article some of his thoughts on Vedanta. Though the author claims in the end that this is 'the story of a layman who is exploring the charming concepts of Vedanta', yet it must be admitted that the author has attempted to present Vedanta with a scientific background and in a simple language, thus carrying an appeal of its own.

1. THE RECONNAISSANCE

Introduction

The day breaks, and the sun ventures out of the dark night in the eastern horizon. This moment is immediately greeted by both men and nature. The wind blows over the leaves deflecting the shaft of light on the top of the tall trees, the birds are awake and give their first call of the day. Early risers are taking their morning walk in the parks meeting friends and exchanging pleasantries. There is a festive mood in the air. It is very surprising that we find so much of liveliness and spirit in a world teaming with danger and death. Life flourishes in the most difficult situations and men overcome hurdles with their inventiveness and extend their power over wider and wider reaches.

Simultaneously, in the inner recess of the heart, everybody is groping in the darkness and is searching for answers to a number of questions: Why do we exist? What is going to happen? Is death the end of all that exists? We do not know if even the earliest of our ancestors suffered these questions but have records that the seers in the Vedas and Lord Buddha had asked them and found answers. These questions are at the very root of our existence as human beings and every individual desires to find his own answer appropriate for his situ-

ation. In every age these old questions are asked afresh in the current language and idioms. They are debated and analysed in the light of the newly discovered scientific and philosophical light and are resolved.

Our Age

Our age is different from the other ages. Never before were there so many free nations in the world and the spirit of freedom more powerful in the breaking down of the barriers between the people and the states for free exchange of material and culture. There were never before so many people living on the earth. With the political freedom everybody is now demanding better quality of life, and many of the newly independent states do not have the economic means of meeting this demand. The old colonial division of the world, ruler and the ruled, no longer exists but the division between the rich and the poor persists. In the new world order, the division has taken a new turn and the rich and educated people in all countries now belong to a new class, leaving the population which is poor and ill-educated behind. This is further accentuated by the advancement of technology, the producers of wealth getting free from labour. A sense of futility envelops modern man. There is a big chasm between him and the giant affairs of the world, and he feels

crushed. We can discuss the advancement of the technology in communications in this respect as an example. We are aware that the technology of transportation and communications has advanced to a level that distance is no longer a barrier and the whole world is practically like one big family. But this has not ensured good neighbourly relationships and cooperation between people. Hatred and intolerance erupt all over the place, here at home, in the nearby middle east, in Africa, in Europe and in America. There are riots, wars, sabotage and destruction because of differences in faith, race, and other imaginary attributes. Unless these barriers in our minds can be removed, no amount of improvement in communication technology

satisfying answers we need. For spiritual Truth remains hidden in a maze of external affairs of the world. Even in religion the concern over non-essential forms and rituals more often than not separates people rather than unites them, creating dissension and hatred rather than reconciliation and amity.

Hinduism

Hindu religion observed superficially by an outsider may present a baffling picture. Even to a Hindu by birth there may be confusion. Values and concepts of society may seem at variance from community to community. Marriage, for example, is an important event. Enjoined by the Vedas, the practice in the hills of the Himalayas, on the

For the religious and social crises we are facing we want answers to our questions which are relevant to present situations, and we want to understand the purpose of life and to know where the current of all the changes is taking us. To find our answers we have to get above the turmoil of the current events and learn to look at our position objectively, from a distance as it were.

can foster good-will and brotherhood among men. Rather, all our progress in science and technology will enhance the spread of crime, violence and insecurity of men everywhere. For the religious and social crises we are facing we want answers to our questions which are relevant to present situations, and we want to understand the purpose of life and to know where the current of all the changes is taking us. To find our answers we have to get above the turmoil of the current events and learn to look at our position objectively, from a distance as it were. There is an old established tradition in the various religious orders of the world for carrying out such an operation. Religion has doubtless been a driving and enlightening force in history and it has been helping humanity through its many social, political and cultural changes and transitions. It will be, however, necessary to go deeper into the spirit of the religions to find

coast of Kerala, and on the plains of North India are so different that the marriage in one place may appear outlandish to the inhabitants of another area. Further, every district may have a special sect or deity, and different rituals. Yet all are in perfect Hindu tradition. We in Bengal may worship Kali as the Supreme Power whereas other people may worship Vishnu, or Siva, or Ganapati with the same devotion. New sects and new interpretations of the Vedas grow up and flourish before our very eyes, and the rest of the people take it all in good spirit. It is like the world, all the time changing and adjusting, but in the long run keeping its essential character, its dharma. There are a number of features in the Hindu systems of belief and practice which remain unchanged below all the surface disparities. These are the body of the knowledge handed down to us in the spiritual part of the Vedas, also known as Vedanta. In our exposition of Hinduism, we

will not go into the ritualism or ceremonial part but remain in the realm of the philosophical. We will discuss the present situation of the world and see if the principles of Vedanta give purpose to human life on this earth.

The World and Its Modeling

It is not possible to describe even the simplest thing, say a speck of dust, completely. We have coined a word, 'modeling' for this purpose as this connotes a limited description of the object for a special purpose and it leaves the possibility of other modeling for the same object. Our model for the world will be limited in purpose, will follow the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda view of the Vedanta and will satisfy the principles of general science. An outline of the model is given in the following paragraphs.

We experience the world at different levels: the cosmos beyond the sky, the earth, the human existence and the inner world inside our mind. Here is an excerpt from a recent casual science report on the cosmos:

The night sky, seemingly serene, is a-buzz with signals from our cosmic neighbourhood: light, radio-waves and other radiation from stars and gas within our galaxy. This cosmic buzz tends to drown out whispers from the wider universe, but two messages do make it through. One, the cosmic microwave background, is well understood as the after glow of the big-bang. The other, a uniform haze of X-rays visible only from space, has been a mystery since its discovery thirty years ago. Pervasive hot gas, supernovae, quasars, and other exotic objects have all been figured as possible sources, but a new X-ray satellite is

now hinting at a more mundane but nonetheless startling candidate: countless galaxies much like our own.¹

Another report (13 August 1993) gave a different set of cosmic events:

Astrophysicists have envisioned two ways for a star weighing more than eight solar masses to end its life. In both cases, the star's fate is sealed when nuclear burning in its core converts the last of its fuel into iron. When the iron core grows to be between 1.5 to 2 solar masses, it can no longer sustain itself against gravity and collapses. If the core weighs less than 1.8 solar masses, as it will in a star less than thirty solar masses, the collapse ends abruptly when the core has formed a neutron star. The jolt generates a shock wave which blows off the remainder of the star. This results in a type-II supernovae with a neutron star left over. In a progenitor star, the collapse does not stop with the formation of a neutron star when the mass is 1.8 star masses or larger and in a matter of milli-seconds, the massive star vanishes into a black hole.

These are so-called objective views of science. But what about our human perspective? Earth is our home, our mother, giving air for breathing, water for drinking and food for sustenance. We are enchanted by her beauty: the bottomless ocean, high mountains, rivers and valleys, and forests and plains, and she is changing all the time. Life on earth has also its painful side: floods, cyclones, earthquakes, droughts. Even a large meteorite may destroy the bio-sphere and we would be helpless. Earth is the only heavenly body we know of where life could evolve and develop to the level of the intelligent human being.

1. Tim Appenzeller, *Science*, American Association for the Advancement of Science, vol. 264, 29 April 1994.

The survival of the individual person and his organization of human society intro-

duces more dimensions to our life in the world: social interactions in all their variety, aesthetics, morality, creativity and so on. And man has created 'science', also his own instruments for viewing his world. Various phenomena of the physical world are studied and we have a fairly good knowledge of things around. But our total knowledge is

number and we finish watching nature go through the tricks and calculate the number again, it is the same.

...Energy has a large number of forms and there is a formula for each one [of them]. These are gravitational energy, kinetic energy, heat energy, elastic energy, radiant energy, nuclear energy, mass en-

...our total knowledge is very incomplete and provisional. Scientists live with the hope that some day, one grand law will be found into which all other laws will amalgamate like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. On the other hand it is also recognized that there is an inherent uncertainty in our knowledge and it is not possible to predict exactly what will happen in any set of circumstances.

very incomplete and provisional. Scientists live with the hope that some day, one grand law will be found into which all other laws will amalgamate like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. On the other hand it is also recognized that there is an inherent uncertainty in our knowledge and it is not possible to predict exactly what will happen in any set of circumstances. We may consider one philosophical approach universally accepted in all scientific enquiry, called 'The Conservation of Energy' and quote what Professor Feynman has said about it.

The Jagat (World) and Conservation of Energy

There is a fact, or if you wish, a law, governing all natural phenomena that are known to date. There is no known exception to [the application of] this law, it is exact so far as we know. The law is called the *Conservation of Energy*. It states that there is a certain quantity, which we call *Energy*, that does not change in the manifold changes which nature undergoes. This is a more abstract idea, because it is a mathematical principle. It says that there is a numerical quantity which does not change when some thing happens. It is not a description of a mechanism or any thing concrete, it is just a strange fact that we calculate some

ergy. If we total up the formulas for each of these contributions, it will not change except for energy going in and out [from one system to another].

Richard Feynman (1918–88) was one of the greatest physicists of this century, who contributed much to the theory of quantum electrodynamics and was honoured with the Nobel Prize in 1965. We may note that he condensed many concepts in this statement of his quoted above. First, 'Energy' mentioned by him is used in two senses: one that does not change, and second, which changes from one form to another in accordance with the conservation principles. We will call the energy 'that does not change' the Primal Energy to distinguish it from the 'changeable form' of energy. The second concept of Feynman is that the [Primal] energy is a most abstract idea and is not anything concrete. It is the unchangeable reality. Third, we can only know the phenomena and cannot directly know the reality; and fourth, when we total up the changes in energy as nature goes through her tricks, it comes to zero.

In the Vedanta tradition, there is a technical word for 'Nature goes through her tricks' It is the phenomenal world, or in

Sanskrit, *Jagat*. The reality, as opposed to the phenomena, is the *Sat* (Existence). As Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Brahman [*Sat*] is Sakti [the Primal Energy]; Sakti is Brahman. They are not two...[but] only two aspects...of the same Reality.² In the common usage in many Indian languages, *Jagat* stands for 'the world' which by implication means the phenomenal world. It follows from the conservation principle that *Jagat* adds up to nothing, not unlike the Vedantic realization that: *Jaganmithyā*—'the world is not what we take it to be'. This common truth indicates the cause of all human sorrow and disappointment with the world. The real nature of Reality is hidden from our mind by the veil of *Maya*. Sri Shankara's philosophical teaching of *Maya*'s delusive power (*Mayavada*) should, therefore, never be considered as other-worldly'. It is simply a statement of facts about the world as we experience it, supported—not opposed by—scientific and mathematical observations and conclusions.

Conservation Principles and Jiva or Life

There is a technical name for the conservation principle in Vedanta Philosophy when it is applied to the living beings: 'the Karma Principle'. The word *karma* means action, and the *Law of Karma* refers to the law of cause and effect which operates, not only in the world of physical objects and matter, but in moral and spiritual life. In this principle, birth, life, and death relate to the gross physical bodies, but there is a part of the individual human being that does not die when the gross physical body falls. It is the person's inner or subtle body composed of mind, intellect and ego-consciousness, which continues to live, all the time propelled by the momentum of the person's individual *karma*. A child is born, as if, with its kinetic and potential karmas; the kinetic

may be compared with the economic and the social position, and the potential with the future achievements which are now dormant. Karma includes not only mechanistic forms of work, but also activities like thinking, feeling, desiring, loving, sacrificing, serving, praying, meditating, etc. During the lifetime of the embodied being, as work is performed, good or bad, its position is changed thereby in terms of the kinetic and the potential karma. After the old life is over, it sheds its body and takes a new birth at a new place and the cycle continues, progressively and regressively, until after many births the Individual Soul (*Jiva*) sheds all its karmas and shines in its identity with the unchanging Primal Energy or Brahman.

Brahman

Brahman is the cornerstone of this model. Experientially, it is the spiritual substratum of the world or cosmos. Brahman cannot be defined by any positive statement, but can only be indicated by reaching the limits of any attribute and saying 'Not this', 'Not this'. On the intellectual level it can only be said to be the ultimate Reality at the base of the world and living beings. It remains unaffected however by the existence or the non-existence of either the world or the life. As the being behind the phenomenal world It is the Primal Energy and is also Consciousness and Bliss. Brahman wills and the creation takes place. In this mode Brahman is called by many names, like Primal Energy, God, Immutable, or *Akshara*. God creates and sustains the world and at dissolution the world remains absorbed in God. Life is not created in this sense, but in life God Himself enters into the bodies for enjoying His own creation as a sport.

The Scriptures

All religions are founded on knowledge revealed through inspired prophets and the subject matter of such revelations is in such concepts as Brahman, *Ātmā*, Karma,

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), p. 271.

subtle matter, realization, liberation, etc., beyond the range of gross human intellect or sense perceptions. These spiritual subjects are encompassed in the Vedas or scriptures. In spiritual matters, the scriptures are authentic guides.

While expressing the revealed knowledge, the early scriptures used the same language, myths and symbolism as was in common usage among the people. The ideas were, many times, couched in contemporary literary traditions and there were allusions to historical personages and events. Incidentally other types of information also got recorded in the scriptures. In later peri-

ods, the scholars debated on these aspects of the scripture along with the matters of spiritual import. Vedanta does not require scripture being considered as authority on worldly matters like science, history, geography, astronomy, medicine, or even religious practices of social nature, like rituals in marriage. The Vedas (Upanishads) are the ultimate authority on philosophical truth. The ritualistic parts of religion are dealt with by subsidiary scriptures, called *smritis* or *puranas*, which may be revised from time to time with respect to the change in social values, but keeping the new traditions also in conformity with the spirit of the Vedas (Upanishads) (*Smriti*).

...the world around us is changing all the time, and the sum total of the changes do not add or take away anything. There is only transformation from one state to another. Unfortunately, we can only know the changes and do not have any way of knowing the unchanging base of the universe with our five senses.

ods, the scholars debated on these aspects of the scripture along with the matters of spiritual import. Vedanta does not require scripture being considered as authority on worldly matters like science, history, geography, astronomy, medicine, or even religious practices of social nature, like rituals in marriage. The Vedas (Upanishads) are the ultimate authority on philosophical truth. The ritualistic parts of religion are dealt with by subsidiary scriptures, called *smritis* or *puranas*, which may be revised from time to time with respect to the change in social values, but keeping the new traditions also in conformity with the spirit of the Vedas (Upanishads) (*Smriti*).

As soon as something is written down it becomes defined and concrete. Yet, the scriptures dealing with abstract thought and moral laws, cannot always be taken literally and give only hints on the ultimate values and goal of life, for which common experience in our day to day life does not easily

reveal True, the ultimate experience of religious practice transcends words and our power of expression. Therefore even the Vedas can only go so far and nothing beyond. The scriptures in our model show the way to infinity, and one would always expect to be surprised to reach the end of the journey and experience Brahman in infinitely richer details than described in the scriptures.³

2 THE PLUNGE

The Creation Theory in Vedanta

The Vedas have an elaborate creation theory for the phenomenal world, a cyclic round of involution-evolution, from the 'seed' state to subtle and gross matter and

then back to the unmanifested seed-state again. We have seen that the world around us is changing all the time, and the sum total of the changes do not add or take away anything. There is only transformation from one state to another. Unfortunately, we can only know the changes and do not have any way of knowing the unchanging base of the universe with our five senses. One of the ways of knowing the base would be to go back in time before the creation started and ask 'Did the creation start from nothing?' or 'was there a *being*, an Existence before the creation commenced?' The Vedanta posed this initial value problem and gave the an-

3 While writing on Vedanta, there is a language problem, many words do not have English equivalents. We will use God for *Ishvara*, being for *sat*, joy or bliss for *ananda*, self for *Atman*, soul for *jivatma*, prophet for *Avatara*, conservation principle for *Sat karma*. *Vad* of Acharya Shankara, embodied being for *jiva*.

swer: In case you are looking for the phenomenal world, there was nothing before the creation started. But if you are looking for the reality, the Vedas affirmed, 'the being (*Sat*) was there before this creation; the One-without-a-second' and called in *Brahman*. Brahman is the Being, is the Consciousness, and is the Bliss (as close as words can come to describing It); and the creation is a spontaneous expression of Brahman. He willed and the creation started.⁴ The list of the created things include the sky to the space, the heat, the air, the water, the earth, the vibration, the life-force, etc. The living beings, from the smallest plants, to the various kinds of insects and animals, to humanity, were not created by an extra-cosmic god, but God himself entered into bodies of the life-forms in order to enjoy his creation, as the Soul.

There are many universes with their respective lords (*Hiranyagarbhas*), of *Īśvaras*, *Sūtrātmās*, or *Brahmās*. These universes are created, they live through growth and transformation and are finally dissolved in Brahman, and this is going on forever in cycles. 'The creator made the sun and the moon like in earlier cycles'; but really, the whole discussion on a start of creation is only a way of speaking. Birth, growth and destruction or dissolution are occurring all the time at different places, as when we see in the sky that the stars and galaxies are being formed and dissolved in space.

There is another question raised in the Vedanta very much like the *isotropy* (lit. 'sameness in all directions') problem in astrophysics. At dissolution, all the qualities forming the creation are in equilibrium and there is complete isotropy. How will this equilibrium be disturbed and the isotropy lost? Vedanta answers this by considering that a new creation really starts with the

seeds of earlier creations, and beneath the equilibrium-state at dissolution, an under-current of activities around the seeds continues and in course of time leads again to the differentiation we find in nature. There is no scope for knowing 'why' all this happens, if there is a 'why'.

Religion does not deal with cosmology as an end in itself, its main concern being the plight of human existence, its spiritual potential, and its goal. From the average person's point of view, there is so much misery on the earth, and if God created it, it is difficult to understand the purpose of this suffering. Vedanta looks at the problem from a different point: it is like a dream; it is inscrutable; or it is the sportive play of the Divine Power. It is as if the soul picks up the body, as a person rides a roller-coaster, and goes up and down with many degrees of freedom: spinning, swaying and moving. The body is inert, and the soul is ever blissful. The embodied being is moving through cycles of birth and death and experiencing the varieties of situations and relationships both bitter and sweet. Misery and happiness, good and bad, intricacies and complexities of human relationships such as between parents and children, brothers and friends, and lovers, husbands and wives, go round and round in cycles. These are the tricks of nature played for the enjoyment of the spirit, without any change in the total attributes. Even in dissolution, the potential Karma remain dormant in the Primal Energy for the next creation, for the time being hidden in the equilibrium of the qualities.

The World of Ethnocentric

To a person, the world is centred round his body. Our concept of science and creation is said to be ethnocentric: the world is created by our mind, coloured by our desires. Let us hear Feynman as he lectures on physics:

4. *Taittiriya Upanisad*, II.vi; II.i.

Each piece, a part of the whole of the nature, is always merely an approximation of the complete truth, or the complete truth as far as we know it. In fact, everything we know is a kind of approximation, because we know that we do not know all the laws as yet. Therefore, things must be learned only to be unlearned again, or more likely, to be corrected....Aside from not knowing all the rules, what we really can explain in terms of these rules is very limited, because almost all situations are so enormously complicated that we cannot follow the plays of the games using the rules, much less tell what is going to happen next....Another most interesting idea and philosophy of science brought about by quantum mechanics is this, it is not possible to predict exactly what will happen in any circumstances

Feynman is not talking exactly on the subjectivity of the knowledge of the physical world but introducing his students to the ever-extending horizon of our knowledge in science and to the uncertainty principles at the sub-atomic scale.

But the message is clear, compared to the certitude of anything scientific during the nineteenth century, we are not so sure about something just because the current scientific knowledge supports it. The collapse of the communist system is another proof of the fallibility of the human intellect. Thus the individual is left to his own resources to cope-up with the demands of his life, with a shrinking base of knowledge too for his support. The hard realities of the world of one person, when observed from outside by another, may not have any meaning, but in that moment when the person is in great stress it is the most pressing problem to him. The problems of others may have no meaning to us because they exist in the mind of the person and we have no good

access to his mind. In the ultimate analysis, our view of the world is shaped only partly by the scientific understanding and mainly by the outlook of all the people constituting the human society. We find so much irrational behaviour at all levels: at the level of the individual person, the family, the class or clan, the community, and the nation. There is a crying need to know ourselves, to know Man, better.

In recognition of the fact that whatever discovery physical science may make, man will continue to be the centre of the world for us, scientific exploration of man has been taken up in right earnestness. There is a lot

The highest achievement of man is when he realizes God and becomes a living god, like a Buddha. Vedanta teaches that it is the destiny of every individual to realize the identity of his inmost self with Brahman, which is the supreme Self.

of work being done for the better understanding of man and human society, and studies are carried out in disciplines like psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, biology and so on.

The World of Man

The human body is the most wonderful creation; we hardly know how the body works. It is unequalled in beauty and power by other natural things or synthetic human products. The body has its own unspoken language and reflects the inner self, and in turn activates our faculties to respond under various passions and situation. The five layers of human existence: material, vital or life, mental, intellectual and aesthetic are not separate bodies, but belong to one entity. The body has demands for assimilating food and other biological functions. It sleeps, dreams and requires protection and comforts. Mind requires knowledge, physical

activities, etc., and these are the driving forces bringing a person in contact with the outside world, nature and society, in many ways.

Nature gives us sustenance and we have taken up the mission of knowing nature, in order to exploit its potential. Men have conquered the depths of the ocean and the heights of the sky. Agriculture and animal husbandry were the earliest forms of using natural processes for meeting the needs of men. Physics has opened out new energy forms for our use, chemistry and metallurgy give us varieties of material necessary for our life, and technology meets our multifarious demand for transport, like aviation, ocean and land transport. Industries have given power, housing, and so on. Computers and electronics are new arrivals in the train of science and technology and in a short time have extended their holds in all spheres of life.

In the plane of society the problems are more complex. Easy travelling has made contacts between heterogenous cultures a routine affair. Scientific inquiry is exploring the secrets of genetics, culture, social growth, economics, political science. In

medicine there is an increasing understanding of the working of the human body and the immunity mechanism so that drug design, transplantation of organs, diagnosis and treatment of diseases can be carried out with knowledge and purpose.

The human body is pathetically weak, but it certainly is the highest of all creations, because a man carries a spark of the spirit of God inside his heart. Man even at the personal level has developed skills to endure the most strenuous conditions of outer space, in the Antarctic cold, deep in the ocean, in the Sahara desert, and at the top of Mount Everest. At the aesthetic level a man enjoys nature and the living world without any motive of material gain. Man is also a creator. The aesthetic and creative spirit in man get expression in literary works, in the arts, in sculpture, architecture, music and sports. The highest achievement of man is when he realizes God and becomes a living god, like a Buddha. Vedanta teaches that it is the destiny of every individual to realize the identity of his inmost self with Brahman, which is the supreme Self.

(to be continued)

The work against evil is more educational than actual, however big we may talk. This, first of all, is the idea of work against evil; and it ought to make us calmer, it ought to take the fanaticism out of our blood. The history of the world teaches us that wherever there have been fanatical reforms, the only result has been that they have defeated their ends.

—Swami Vivekananda

The Allusions of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses

DR. N. EAKAMBARAM

Dr. Eakambaram of Madras analyses Swami Vivekananda's utterances at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and points out that in delivering his message Swamiji drew on the sacred texts and hymns profusely. Says the author, 'what comes through in an impressive way is Swami Vivekananda's fiery imagination, his zeal to serve humanity, and his splendid mastery of the English language'.

It is surprising to note the wide range of allusions in Swami Vivekananda's Chicago addresses, for, he was certainly aware of the novelty of his sources to his large American audience. But such was his faith and rhetoric that he draws on sacred texts like the *R̥g-Veda*, the *Yajur-Veda*, Upaniṣads like *Śvetāśvatara*, *Taittiriya*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Kāṭha*, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Mahābhārata*, and various hymns in Sanskrit. A few of the speeches are closely organized, probably they are written presentations. But many seem to be extempore performances, probably spoken out of brief notes, as they are at times marked by repetition and apparent inconsistency. But what comes through in an impressive way is Swami Vivekananda's fiery imagination, his zeal to serve humanity, and his splendid mastery of the English language. The present paper explores the allusions of the Swami's Chicago addresses, hoping thereby to open out some depths of religious experience.

Swami Vivekananda's addresses at the Parliament of Religions, Chicago, constitute a landmark in the history of Hinduism, as the western world woke up to the existence of a new corpus of ideas and religious experiences. Though Max Müller, and other Indologists had translated the Vedas and other sacred texts of India into the English language, the West had never seen a living

embodiment of such universal religious experience. Biographies like *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples document the context of the Parliament of Religions which was held from September 11 to 27, 1893, as a part of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The main intention was to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the continent by Christopher Columbus and show to the world the achievements of America in the realm of science and technology. In addition to the World's Fair, the Parliament of Religions was organized to bring together representatives of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Mohammedanism and Mazdaism. The Parliament opened at 10 a.m. on 11 September 1893, in the large Hall of Columbus in the newly built Art Institute. The Hall which had a seating capacity of 4000 was full with around 7000 persons. Cardinal Gibbons, the highest prelate of the Roman Catholic Church, occupied a chair of state and opened the meeting with a prayer. On the dais were seated representatives of the Brahmo Samaj, the Ceylon Buddhists, the Jains, Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society and many others. 'Conspicuous...was an eloquent monk from India, Vivekananda by name. He was clad in gorgeous red apparel and wore a large turban, his remarkably fine features and

bronze complexion standing out prominently in the great throng ¹ When the delegates read out their prepared speeches, and Swami Vivekananda's turn came, he was nervous, because he had never addressed such a large audience and did not have a prepared speech. Finally, after postponing his turn several times, he stood up with great trepidation, and addressed the audience as 'Sisters and Brothers of America'. This evoked such a resounding applause from the audience because 'they were deeply moved to see, at last, a man who discarded formal words and spoke to them with the natural and candid warmth of a brother' ²

Swami Vivekananda thanked the people of America 'in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world, in the name of the mother of religions, in the name of millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and castes' ³ He spoke of how Hinduism 'has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance'. But more than that, it accepts 'all religions as true'. He cited a passage from the 'Sivamahimnah Stotram' (Stanza 7) by Pushpadanta 'As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee'. The Swami follows with another passage from the *Bhagavad-Gita* ⁴ to vindicate the interna-

tional convention 'Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him, all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me'. Swamiji's translation is a free rendering of the source, as he does not want to confuse the American audience with Sanskrit quotations. He ends his speech with a fervent hope that sectarianism, bigotry and fanaticism come to an end. A thundering ovation greeted the Swami's speech. Swami Nikhilananda's comment is appropriate

Whereas every one of the other delegates had spoken for his own ideal or his own sect, the Swami had spoken about God, who, as the ultimate goal of all faiths, is their inmost essence. And he had learnt that truth at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, who had taught incessantly, from his direct experience, that all religions are but so many paths to reach the same goal. The Swami gave utterance to the yearning of the modern world to break down the barriers of caste, colour and creed and to fuse all people into one humanity ⁵

Though Swami Vivekananda spoke about a dozen times in the Parliament, only six of the speeches are included in the *Complete Works* ⁶ The paper on 'Hinduism' ⁷ read at the Parliament on 19 September 1893, is comprehensive, for it examines the nature and destiny of man from the perspective of Hindu Metaphysics, psychology and theology. 'The divinity of the soul, the oneness of existence, the non-duality of the Godhead, and harmony of religions were the recurring

1 *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), vol. 1, p. 415 [Hereafter *Life*]

2 Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1987), p. 119 [Hereafter *Biography*]

3 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, p. 3 [Hereafter *Complete Works*]

4 4.11, tr. Swami Tapasyananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1984)

5 *Biography* pp. 119-20

6 *Complete Works*, vol. 1 pp. 2-24

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-20

themes of his message.⁸

He begins his paper with the claim of the antiquity of Hinduism and the centrality of the Vedas. Of all the pre-historic religions—Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism, it is only Hinduism that has come down to us because of its highly philosophic nature. The Vedas, of which especially the Upaniṣads, constitute the foundation of this religion. He points out that 'The Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the Vedas...by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times.'⁹ God-men called Rishis are the discoverers of these spiritual laws which are eternal. No wonder the Hindu repeats in his daily prayer: 'The sun and the moon, the Lord created like the suns and moons of previous cycles'—a hymn from 'Agamaṣana Sūkta', *Rg-Veda*.¹⁰

Swami Vivekananda asks the eternal and tantalizing question that has troubled man: 'Who am I?' and the answer from the Vedas is: 'I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I shall not die. Here am I in this body; it will fall, but I shall go on living.' The last sentence is from the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*¹¹ where the father tells his son Svetaketu that 'Thou art That', referring to the soul. Swami Vivekananda goes on to point out that the soul had a past, and an endless cycle of births and deaths and the consequent accumulation of experience of many lives that lie latent in the depths of the soul. Quoting from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*:¹² 'Him the sword cannot

pierce—him the fire cannot burn—him the water cannot melt—him the air cannot dry,' the Swami declared: 'The Hindu believes that every soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose centre is located in the body, and that death means the change of this centre from body to body.'¹³ It is a mystery as to how the 'free, unbounded, holy, pure, and perfect' soul or Atman has come to be associated with the body. The Swami raises the question whether the soul is eternally bound on the wheel of life and death:

Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions—a powerless, helpless wreck in an ever-raging, ever-rushing, uncompromising current of cause and effect; a little moth placed under the wheel of causation which rolls on crushing everything in its way and waits not for the widow's tears or the orphan's cry? The heart sinks at the idea, yet this is the law of Nature. Is there no hope? Is there no escape?¹⁴

These images of the tiny boat and the little moth are so vivid and dramatic that they bring out the helplessness of the individual soul caught in an endless cycle of opposites. The Hindu theory of *Karma* was never so well expressed as here.

From this abyss of despair, Swami Vivekananda addressed his American audience as 'Children of immortal bliss' (*amṛtasya putrāḥ*). The rays of hope and light dispel the darkness as the Swami quotes the sage Śvetāśvatara: 'Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! even ye that reside in higher

8. *Biography*, p. 121.

9. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, pp. 6–7.

10. 10.190.3; ed. Max Müller (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), reprint in two volumes.

11. 6.11.3; tr. Swami Gambhirananda, with the commentary of Shankaracharya (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983).

12. 2.3; tr. Swami Tapasyananda.

13. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 9.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion: knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again.'¹⁵ The Swami follows this up with a quotation from the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*: 'One "By whose command the wind blows, the fire burns, the clouds rain, and death stalks upon the earth"'¹⁶; from *Prapanna-Gītā*: 'Thou art our father, Thou are our mother, Thou are our beloved friend'¹⁷; from *Śukla-Yajur-Veda Samhitā*: 'Thou art the source of all strength; give us strength'¹⁸; and two other quotations from the Vedas: 'Thou art He that beareth the burdens of the universe; help me bear the little burden of this life'; and 'He is to be worshipped as the one beloved, dearer than everything in this and the next life.'

Swami Vivekananda cites the *Bhagavad-Gītā* to describe a man of selfless action: 'a man ought to live in this world like a lotus leaf, which grows in water but is never moistened by water, so a man ought to live in the world—his heart to God and his hands to work.'¹⁹ A devotee should be like Chaitanya who in 'Śikṣāṣṭakam' (stanza 4) prays: 'Lord, I do not want wealth, nor children, nor learning. If it be Thy will, I shall go from birth to birth, but grant me this, that I may love Thee without the hope of reward—love unselfishly for love's sake.'

15. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 2.5, 3.8; tr. Swami Gambhirananda, with the commentary of Shankaracharya (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1986).

16. 2.8.1; *Eight Upaniṣads*; vol. 1: *Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha*, and *Taittirīya*. vol. 2: *Aitareya, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya* and *Praśna*. Tr. Swami Gambhirananda, with the commentary of Shankaracharya (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1957).

17. Verse 28.

18. 19.9; ed. Devichand (with English trans.) (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1980).

19. Cf. 5.10.

Also Yudhishtira in the *Mahābhārata* is a shining example of a virtuous man. In the 'Vanaparva'²⁰, when Draupadi asks him why a virtuous man like him should suffer so much misery, he says:

Behold, my queen, the Himalayas, how grand and beautiful they are; I love them. They do not give me anything, but my nature is to love the grand, the beautiful, therefore I love them. Similarly, I love the Lord. He is the source of all beauty, of all sublimity. He is the only object to be loved; my nature is to love Him, and therefore I love. I do not pray for anything; I do not ask for anything. Let Him place me wherever He likes. I must love Him for love's sake. I cannot trade in love.²¹

Another name of Yudhishtira is Dharma-
raja or the king of Righteousness. He does not ask God why he is made to suffer, as God's ways are inscrutable and man has merely to accept whatever is his portion of life. Of course, man has to do his work and offer the fruits of his work to God.

Swami Vivekananda claims that one of the central concepts of Hinduism is the process of God's revelation to man. Drawing on ideas from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and the *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*, the Swami declares: 'He reveals Himself to the pure heart; the pure and the stainless see God, yea, even in this life; then and then only all the crookedness of the heart is made straight. Then all doubt ceases. He is no more the freak of a terrible law of causation.'²² Hinduism lays emphasis on the Individual's direct experience of

20. 31.2.5; *Mahābhārata* 'Vanaparva', Critical edition, (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute).

21. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 12.

22. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.3.14–15; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2.8.

God, 'in realizing—not in believing,... in being and becoming.' A realized soul would be like sage Śvetāśvatara who declares: 'I have seen the soul; I have seen God.'²³ *Mukti* or freedom is this state of perfection when death and misery cannot cast their shadow on man. Such a man lives in the state of *Sat-cit-ānanda* or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, a state of union with God or identity in Brahman. He achieves a kind of 'infinite universal individuality', 'a universal consciousness'.

This part of Swami Vivekananda's paper²⁴ beginning with the reference to the 'Children of immortal bliss' is replete with quotations from the sacred texts—there are more than a dozen quotations in less than four pages. It is not that the Swami wants to dazzle and confound the large audience in the Parliament of Religions. In fact, he avoids not only indicating the sources of his quotations, but also chanting the *mantras* in Sanskrit. He conveys only the ideas and mentions that they belong to the Vedic sages or to Krishna or Yudhishtira. The quotations are not there as marks of scholarship, but they form an organic part of Swami Vivekananda's discourse which embodies an intuition of the divine. The power of the Swami's personality is obvious in the manner in which he uses his sources. He brings to a point of convergence the fundamental principles of this faith and thereby achieves a core statement of Hinduism. The quotations are like altar flowers.

In the remaining part of the paper²⁵ Swami Vivekananda points out that religious bigotry has no place in India as toleration is the hallmark of Hinduism. Ranging from a variety of forms of worship, including idolatry, to the heights of Advaitic con-

templation, Hinduism can be a universal religion. No wonder the *Ṛg-Veda* declares: *Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*, meaning 'Truth is one; the sages call it variously', a statement that Swami Vivekananda was very fond of. The Swami quotes passages from *Mahānirvāṇatantra*²⁶ about external and other kinds of worship; from *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*²⁷ about how the sun, the moon, the stars and the lightning shine—'through Him they all shine'; also from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*²⁸; and from Vyasa's *Brahma Sūtras* to bring home the idea of the acceptance of diverse religions. The Swami reiterates the last part of the paper in the brief address at the final session of the Parliament of Religions:

It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character...upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'²⁹

This is rhetoric of the highest order—'the right words in the right order'—at the service of the concept of world religion. In the *Life* his disciples write that 'The Swami was undoubtedly in that hour at the summit of his illustrious career, preaching through the Parliament, to all peoples of the earth, the sovereignty of human nature, its divinity, and the unity of all souls.'³⁰ He was an apostle of a new order of religious

(Continued on page 322)

23. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 3.21.

24. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, pp. 11–14.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–20.

26. 4.12; tr. Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe) (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1953).

27. 2.2.25.

28. 7.7, 10.41.

29. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 24.

30. *Life*, vol. 1, p. 422.

Bhagavad-Gita and Bhakti

DR. P.V. NARAYANASWAMY

Chapter XII of the Bhagavad-Gita describes bhakti (devotion) and the characteristics of a bhakta (devotee). It explains in easily understandable language the state of mind of a devotee of God. To a devotee, God is the culmination of all human attainments and the recipient of his undivided love. Equal-mindedness, freedom from selfish desires, surrender of our whole being to the indwelling spirit, and universal love arise in one when one sees the one Self in all existence. When the above qualities are manifest, our devotion is said to have become perfect and we become God's very own. In this article Dr. P.V. Narayanaswamy of Bangalore elaborates on these qualities of a devotee of God.

*Nāham vasāmi vaikunṭhe,
yoginām hṛdayeṣu ca,
Mad bhaktāḥ yatra gāyanti,
tatra tiṣṭāmi nārada.*

*I abide not in heaven, nor in the hearts of
yogis. Where my devotees sing my glories,
there do I dwell, O Narada.¹*

Bhagavad-Gita, or the Song Celestial, contains the sacred utterances of Bhagavan Krishna. While each chapter has its own importance, chapters 7 to 12 are especially important for they deal with the subject of devotion. In chapter 11, we come across an entrancing description of God's cosmic form, which enables one to appreciate the idea God's all-pervasiveness, His imminence in His creation, 'All creation in a grain of sand'². In chapters 7 and 8, the blessed Lord has expounded on the inconceivable, omnipresent, indestructible, indefinable, eternal, immovable, unmanifest and changeless Supreme Lord. Chapter 9 with the perceivable forms of the Lord. Arjuna was therefore cast into doubt: Which form of worship, of God with form or of the Imperishable, makes one a greater yogi?

It may be seen that this doubt is strikingly similar to his earlier doubt: Which is superior, *karma-yoga* or *sannyasa*? Bhagavan Krishna had replied that while both lead to the supreme Bliss, the Yoga-of-Action is superior. This reply was relevant to Arjuna's state of mind, for he had yet to undergo the Yoga-of-Action before becoming eligible for *sannyasa*.

Arjuna was a constant companion of Sri Krishna and looked upon Sri Krishna as his friend, philosopher and guide. He had the rare opportunity to see the Lord's cosmic form too as described in chapter 11. Bhagavan Sri Krishna therefore tells Arjuna that worship of God with form is easier and worship of the Imperishable is fraught with difficulties. Sri Krishna also adds that while both methods of worship lead to the same goal, the worship of the Imperishable, merely on account of its being more difficult, is not to be considered a superior method.

The *summum bonum* of bhakti is explained in *śloka* 8 of chapter 12 in the words, 'Fix your mind and intellect on Me alone, and in Me alone you will live hereafter. There is no doubt about it.' A jiva's association with another jiva is basically relative and constantly changing. For instance, one may play the role of a father, son, friend or

1. Narada Bhakti Sutras.

2. Thoughts on the Gita by Bhava.

foe, depending on the circumstance, but the relationship between jiva and God is fundamental, being that between the created and the creator. The Lord emphasizes that this relation should be continuously remembered and be unwavering even under changing circumstances. A sincere devotee is not a mere creature of mechanical habit, worshipping God only in the morning or in the evening, but one having the vision of God or the innumerable aspects of His glories flashing in the firmament of his mind always. The changing 'relative' relationships between one jiva and another gives rise to inter-personal problems. These, however, evaporate when one turns into a constant bhakta. If man finds it difficult to think of God in such a manner, Sri Krishna suggests alternatives: *Abhyāsa* (Yoga of practice through japa, satsangha, etc.), *Matkarma-paramah* (dedication of all activities to God), *sarvakarmaphalatyaṅgam* (renunciation of the fruits of all actions as an act of surrender to God). When work is done and the results are offered to God, peace is sure to follow.

In addressing Arjuna as Pāṇḍava, Bhagavan Krishna reminds Arjuna of his good *samskāras*. Bhakti however is not mere devotion with blind-faith and a 'soft-hearted effusiveness'³. It has to be supplemented with abject surrender. One must be free from undesirable feelings and unwarranted anxieties. Especially, during leisure the mind must be communicating with God through japa, bhajan, satsangha, etc. Bhakti drives away irresistible attractions and negative tendencies. Even if one is a *karmayogi* or a *jñānayogi*, one cannot do without bhakti. In fact a jñānayogi is first a bhakta and then a yogi. True bhakti is love for God exclusively. It is as intense and unremitting as the love non-discriminating people have for the evanescent objects of the world. And the Bhakta must make continuous efforts to love the

Lord and should never be complacent about lack of progress.

The devotee engages himself with all his energy in the direct service of God, putting his sense organs to proper use. Thus he use his eyes only to see and revel in His form; his ears only to listen to His glory; his mouth only to utter His holy Names; his feet to circumambulate Him or to go on pilgrimage; his hands only to worship Him with flowers, incense sticks, lighted lamp, etc. Do we not read in Shankaracharya's *Śiva mānasa pūjā* (mental worship):

आत्मा त्वमं गिरिजा मतिः
सहचराः प्राणाः शरीरं गृहं
पूजा ते विषयोपभोगरचना
निद्रा समाधिस्थितिः।
सञ्चारः पदयोः प्रदक्षिणविधिः
स्तोत्राणि सर्वा गिरो
यद्यत्कर्म करोमि तत्तदखिलं
शम्भो तवाराधनम्॥

*You are my Atman, my intellect is Girijā, my sense organs are your servants, my body is your temple. My senses are offerings with which to worship you. My going to sleep is entering samadhi. My walking about is circumambulation. My words only dwell on your might, majesty and magnificence. Whatever works I engage myself in are all worship accorded to you.*⁴

The worshipper of the Imperishable has to have his sense organs under his control. His devotion, though indirect, is more difficult to practise, especially for those who are identified with the body. Both disciplines entail, as a basic sine qua non, the control of the senses, channelizing the senses correctly in worship of God with form at first, and then fully quietening them for the worship of the Imperishable. Bhakti is the best means for drawing the mind away

3. Thoughts on the Gita by M.K. Gandhi.

4. Shankaracharya's *Śiva mānasa pūjā*.

from the senses, for, how can sense-objects pull that mind which is attracted by the superior pull of love for God. Otherwise, steeped in ignorance, we are led astray by the pull of the senses and our mad monkey-like minds roam about indiscriminately wallowing in the sense pleasures. As Shankaracharya said:⁵

शब्दादिभिः पञ्चभिरेव पञ्च
पञ्चत्वमापुः स्वगुणेन बद्धाः।
कुरङ्गमातङ्गपतङ्गमीन-
भृङ्गा नरः पञ्चभिरञ्चितः किम्॥

The five creatures—the deer, the elephant, the butterfly, the fish, and the bee come, to grief in vain attempts to satisfy a single sense, viz. sound, touch, sight, taste, or smell. One can imagine the pitiable plight of man who endeavours to satisfy all the five!

Bhagavan Krishna all along advises the worship of God with form for the common man. In chapter 2, He avers the material body as containing a divine spark. In chapter 8, He states that he who thinks of Him within himself is considered the most perfect. In chapter 7, He explains how the living body is a part and parcel of the universal form of the Lord.

In the worship of the Imperishable, one has to depend largely on self-effort. In worship of God endowed with form, the devotee is lifted from the sea of *saṁsāra*, the world, by Him (ch. 12, sl. 7). In the *Avadhūta-Gītā* it is mentioned with regard to worship of the Imperishable, that it is far too difficult to be devoted to one 'who is formless, who through Himself, by Himself, and in Himself, fills up everything. Indeed the Immuta-ble does not effect an easy hold on the mind.'⁶

In fact, just as *karmayoga* and *sannyasa* are the obverse and reverse of the same coin, so also the worship of God with form and worship of the Imperishable complement each other. There is no contradiction between them. When we worship God in a stone idol, we mentally invoke His presence in the idol through faith and devotion. The criterion for worship is not the stony feature of the idol, but our faith in Him through the stone image. Is there not an element of formless worship in it? As a matter of fact, one merges into the other. One can say that worship of God with form is a step and worship of the Imperishable is the culmination. To borrow a mundane analogy, *saguṇa bhakti* is like the rear wheel of a cycle and *nirguṇa bhakti* the front wheel. As muscular power is transmitted through the chain to the rear wheel, which in turn activates the front wheel, even so, *saguṇa bhakti* gives a push for what ultimately grows into *nirguṇa bhakti*.

In the *Ramayana* which is a store-house of fine values of living and enduring qualities of *dharma*, we come across Lakshmana who typifies *bhakti*. Just as a fish cannot live without water, Lakshmana was virtually a fish out of water in Rama's absence. He lived for Rama's welfare. He accompanied Rama to the forest. He stayed awake while Rama rested. He was so indispensable to Rama that the pair represented two physical bodies with one mind. Lakshmana also had to perform the unenviable task of forsaking Sita in the forest at Rama's behest. Lakshmana was Rama's shadow until he became one with Him. What a noble example of selfless *saguṇa bhakti*!

Bharata affords an illustrious example of one steeped in *nirguṇa bhakti*. Though separated from Rama by space and time, he constantly thought of Rama and carried out *lokasaṁgraha* drawing his authority from Rama's sandals. While Rama lived as an ascetic in the forest, Bharata lived as a re-

5. *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, Śloka 76.

6. *Bhagavad-Gita* by Dr. Radhakrishnan.

cluse in the outskirts of Ayodhya. Though physically far away from Rama, Bharata was one with Him in spirit. His indeed was a noble example of *nirguṇa bhakti*.

In the last few *śloka*s (ch. 12, sl. 13–19), in beautiful poetical verses resplendent with the quintessence of moral perfection, Sri Krishna delineates the traits of a true devotee. These *śloka*s deserve to be read, reflected upon and memorized, so that one can draw inspiration from the laudable qualities they speak of. The golden qualities spoken of also bear favourable comparison with the traits of a man of steadfast wisdom (*sthitaprajña*).

A true devotee possesses the following traits:

1. Compassion for all and enmity towards none.
2. Complete absence of 'I'-ness and 'my'-ness.
3. Equanimity of mind in happiness and sorrow.
4. Contentment.
5. Pertinacity of purpose and single-hearted devotion.
6. Dedication of mind and intellect to Him.
7. Freedom from emotions such as joy, fear, anger, anxiety.
8. Freedom from wants, pure internally and externally, untroubled, and selfless in all activities.
9. Renounces good and evil with the innocence of a child.
10. Maintenance of mental equipoise in praise and censure, in pleasure and pain.

One need not feel deterred by such a long list. One can try one's best and leave the

rest to God, because if one walks even at a snail's pace Godward, God in His infinite mercy will run towards him with open arms, as explained in the *śloka* 7: Very soon I lift him from the morass of *samsāra*.

A realized soul has no bondage, no established norms of behaviour, no motive for performing actions, no ill-feeling towards any one. He may work, preach or even instruct through silence.

Many seekers were the recipients of Ramana Maharishi's grace through what is known as silent communication. Mere sitting in his presence elevated one spiritually. When he suffered from cancer, he underwent a surgical operation, more to assuage the feelings of devotees than out of personal considerations. When the surgeon performed surgery without administering an anaesthetic as expressly wished by the Maharishi, he did not even wink his eyelid. Such was his control of mind over physical pain.

Again, Sri Ramakrishna, afflicted with cancer in the throat, incessantly talked to, guided, and advised those who came to him for his grace, despite words of caution from the attending doctors. His noble purpose in life was to live for the sake of others, and to help anyone who came to him eagerly seeking advice on how to attain love of God. Jesus Christ, exemplified in his own life the ideal of forgiveness when he prayed to the Father in heaven to forgive his tormentors and those who sentenced him to be nailed on the cross. □

If the mind ever so slightly strays from the Ideal (Brahman) and becomes outgoing, then it goes down and down, just as a play-ball inadvertently dropped on the staircase bounces down from one step to another.

—*Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, *śloka* 325

Synopsis of Question-Answer Sessions

SWAMI NIKHILESWARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Q. *Everyone talks about development of women and their rights, but still there is exploitation of women. Why is it so?*

(A student from GGIC, Lohaghat)

A. The recent summit on women held at Beijing has revealed that exploitation of women in some form or the other is going on in almost every country. The solution lies in women organizing themselves and solving their own problems. Swami Vivekananda used to say that the problems of women should be solved by women themselves. He had predicted that future generations will see Vedanta being preached to the masses and this will be done by the women. So Swamiji had great faith that the status of women will rise all over the world.

But feminism is not the complete answer. Betty Friden, after twenty years of publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, wrote *The Second Stage*, in which she asked her sisters to go back to their traditional role—wifehood, motherhood and nurturing. Betty Friden had started the feminist movement in America but she has admitted that the movement has caused more divorces, more families have broken, and the feminist movement has not helped in the development of women as was originally envisaged. Women will have to develop cohesively with men—as one entity.

The strong point in women is their motherhood and divinity. Sri Ramakrishna looked upon every woman as a manifesta-

tion of the Divine Mother. He worshipped his own wife, Sri Sarada Devi, in the form of *Shodasi*. If women remember these two aspects of theirs, their motherhood and their divinity, men will be compelled to hold them in high regard and refrain from oppressing them. Swami Vivekananda wrote in a letter to Swami Shivananda in 1894, 'Why is it that our country is the weakest and the most backward of all countries?—Because Shakti is held in dishonour there. Mother has been born to revive that wonderful Shakti in India; and making Her the nucleus, once more will Gargis and Maitreyis be born into the world.' So a new age is dawning in which women are going to play a pivotal role. That is our hope.

Q. *Why are more and more people committing suicide?*

(A student from GIC, Champavat)

A. The number of persons committing suicide is increasing all over the world, particularly in the affluent countries. On an average, about 1500 persons are committing suicide in the world daily. Books dealing with suicide are also becoming popular. These are alarming facts. There are many factors responsible for this increasing incidence of suicide but the basic reason is the want of peace of mind and the lack of understanding about the precious value of human life. Blind pursuit of purely materialistic pleasures leads to competition, anxiety, frustration, mental imbalance, restlessness of mind, and lack of peace of mind. The basic

source of peace of mind is *within* each of us. The poet Kabir has said:

मोको कहाँ तू ढूँढे
बन्दे मैं तो तेरे पासमें
खोजोगे तो अभी मिलूँगा
पलभर की तलाशमें।

*Moko kahān tū dhūṁḍhe
bande main to tere pāsmen
Khojoge to abhī milūṅgā
palbhar kī talāśmen.*

People are searching for joy and peace in external objects and gadgets. But consumerism is not giving them peace of mind. The solution is to seek this peace of mind within oneself through meditation, prayer, and positive thinking. Sometimes boys and girls come to us who have the idea of committing suicide but once they understand the importance and purpose of human life, their lives get changed. Some of them have become mentally so strong that they are now saving others from that terrible fate and also helping them to get out of mental depression.

Q. Please throw light on the values of successful living and how to practise these values in our day to day life?

(A student from Central School, Pithoragarh)

A. I will state for you the basic virtues in the form of Pañcaśīla (a group of five principles): self-control, self-knowledge, self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-sacrifice.

First comes self-control which is a must for gaining the concentration of mind, the key to success in every aspect of life.

Next one must strive for Self-knowledge which really means knowledge of the Self, or God-realization. This gives one infinite power, makes one fearless and strong.

However, in the conventional sense it also means knowledge about oneself, i.e. knowing about the capabilities and limitations of one's body, mind, intellect, etc. Many times we are unaware of our own capacities. Preparing the list of qualities inherent in our own personality will go a long way in instilling confidence in ourselves. Thus self-confidence comes from self-knowledge. Swami Vivekananda says, 'The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves.'

Possessed of self-confidence, one will have to exert oneself. There is no substitute for hard work. We are the creator of our own destinies, and without depending on others, without blaming ill-luck, we have to exert to the utmost.

But with all these virtues, you can still become a selfish giant if you do not have the spirit of self-sacrifice. Sacrifice does not necessarily mean that one should give up the world and take to a monastic life. What is intended is the sacrifice of the selfish ego so that one becomes an enlightened citizen and lives with peace of mind and in harmony with others.

Q. What is the art of living? Is it the same for all?

(A student from Polytechnic, Lohaghat)

A. Everyone has to develop one's personality according to one's own capabilities along the line of least resistance. However, the fundamentals are the same. Poet Kabir has said:

जब तू आया जगत में, जग हँसे तू रोये।
ऐसी करनी कर चलो, तू हँसे जग रोये॥

*Jab tū āyā jagat men, jag haṁse tū roye;
Aisī karnī kar calo, tū haṁse jag roye.*

When you were born into this world, you were weeping and the whole world was all smiles. Live in such a manner that at the time of death, you part with a smile on your lips [with the feeling of satisfaction], and let others weep [thinking such a nice person has departed from this world].

Swam Vivekananda wrote to the Maharaja of Mysore,

My noble Prince, this life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but they alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive.

So, the art of living is to live with peace of mind for oneself, being at peace with others, serving others in every possible way so that you do not have to repent in the evening of your life that you did not utilize your life in the best manner possible. □

The Allusions of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses

(Continued from page 315)

thought'. In her introduction to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Sister Nivedita observes with great perception the impact of the Swami's address on his audience in Chicago:

Of the Swami's address before the Parliament of Religions, it may be said that when he began to speak, it was of the 'religious ideas of the Hindus', but when he ended, Hinduism had been created....³¹ For, it was no experience of his

own that rose to the lips of the Swami Vivekananda there. He did not take advantage of the occasion to tell the story of his Master. Instead of either of these, it was the religious consciousness of India that spoke through him, the message of his whole people, as determined by their whole past.³²

31. *Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. x.

32. *Ibid.*, p. xi.

There is the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) to be sure. He is residing in your very heart. He is your inmost Self, as also the inmost Self of all. Take refuge in him, pray to him. He will fill your heart with peace; he will remove all your wants. The body has to die one day or another; not a single body is immortal. It is as sure as anything that this body made of the different elements will again disintegrate into them. Hence take refuge in the Lord who is the eternal Truth, the everlasting, unchanging, conscious Self of every being. Hold on to Him. Then you will have no fear in the shoreless sea of this world; you will easily cross it.

—Swami Shivananda in *For Seekers of God*, pp. 213–4.

Reviews and Notices

VIVEKANANDA: EAST MEETS WEST: By
Swami Chetanananda, publ. Vedanta
Society of St. Louis, 205 South Skinker
Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63105, U.S.A.;
1995; pp. 164 + xii; US \$ 35.00

Read the description of this creature: It has black wings and a black back. Its beak and neck are rich yellow tint. Its front portion is snow white. Its legs are small, it walks, but cannot fly and so on. Suppose ten people are asked to draw a figure of this creature. We can be sure that the figures would be quite dissimilar, imagination having run wild. If however there was a photograph alongside the description, that would make the difference.

It is our great good fortune that we have photographs of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. For the first time in the spiritual history of the world we have photographs of an Incarnation of God and his disciples. The value of the photographs of these great souls can never be exaggerated.

Vivekananda: East Meets West is a pictorial biography of Swami Vivekananda. The Advaita Ashrama as early as November 1966 had brought out a pictorial biography as a centenary tribute to the illustrious personality. The present book follows the pattern of the original with some advantages. The printing is much better due to improvements in technology during the thirty years that have elapsed. Second, much new material hitherto unknown has been added. For instance, there are about fifty-two single photographs of Swami Vivekananda in the older work, while in the new there are about sixty-eight. It may be noted that in two or three places, pictures are printed differing merely in size. The list of acknowledgement towards the end of the book shows that the Advaita Ashrama has contributed eighty-eight photographs while the Vedanta Society of San Francisco has contributed eighty-six. In this connection it may also be noted

that there is third photo-album on Swami Vivekananda prepared by the Vedanta Society of San Francisco.

The apparently enigmatic title of the book, *Vivekananda: East Meets West*, can have three interpretations: (1) that there is already a sweet union between the East and the West, (2) that Swamiji says that such a union between the East and the West does exist, and (3) that Swamiji is himself the bridge between the East and the West. Here, the word 'East' means India, and the word 'West' is used in a very broad sense. The book may be viewed from these three perspectives.

1. A Sweet Union between East and West.

Christopher Isherwood, in his introduction, says that Vivekananda's education was Western, rather than Indian. Beginning with Narendranath's childhood, upto his collegiate days, the atmosphere in which Narendra was brought up was predominantly modern. Being highly qualified himself, Narendra's father took great care to bring up his family along modern lines of thought. In his college days, Narendra studied Western philosophy among other subjects. He was influenced by the Brahmo Samaj which did not believe in a personal God or in the worship of images. Narendra's thinking was scientific and logical. His questioning spirit led him in his search for Truth to Sri Ramakrishna. It was his principal, Prof. Hastie, who for the first time told Narendra about Sri Ramakrishna. Prof. Hastie is also to be credited for first recognizing the greatness in Narendra. The sweet union between the East and the West in the person of Narendra is further noticed in his super-human achievements, in the spiritual field on the one hand, and his scientific temperament on the other. His ideas about organizational approach in solving life's problems, about the need for industrial growth in India, etc. were all Western inspiration.

The first chapter is 'Narendra, the Chief of Men'. There are about fifteen photographs here with a short sketch in prose of the early life of Swamiji. Sri Ramakrishna's

and Swamiji's words are quoted to highlight various incidents in their lives. Amongst the photographs in chapter 1 are those of Sri Ramakrishna, Bhuvaneshwari Devi, Narendranath, Swamiji's palm, Prof. Hastie, and so on. The theme of this chapter is Swamiji's early life: birth, ancestral home and early education.

The second chapter with fifteen pictures has for its theme Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna had waited long for Narendra's coming to him. When at last the latter did arrive, Sri Ramakrishna was very pleased. Using his mystic touch, Sri Ramakrishna fathomed the real personality behind the boy and found that it tallied with his expectation. Thereafter began Narendra's spiritual training which culminated in his acceptance of Kali. When the thoroughbred Westerner in Naren had fully realized the ideal of the East, the task was done and Sri Ramakrishna left the scene. There are beautiful pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, Dakshineswar, Mother Kali, Jadu Mallick's garden house, and so on—all associated with the few years of Narendra's contact with his Master. Towards the end of the chapter are two pictures showing the associates of Sri Ramakrishna standing around his mortal remains (which is not shown). With the passing of the Master, a new chapter begins in the life of Narendranath and all his brother disciples.

2. *Swamiji says, 'East Meets West'.*

Though Swamiji's spiritual preparations to accomplish his stupendous work were over, his intellectual grasp of India's condition was yet to be. His travels all over the country provided him rich and varied experiences. In the first few pages of the third chapter of the book, we come across pictures of the other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. The pictures follow the sequel of his visits to Varanasi, Gazipur, Delhi, Brindavan, Haras, Hardwar, Almora, and later the southern India, literally following in the footsteps of Swamiji. Including the pictures of the direct disciples there are about thirty-one photographs in this chapter. Thus, with the ideal of the East fully realized, and with the condition of India fully grasped, Swamiji ultimately sailed over to the U.S.A.

to attend the Parliament of Religions. His immediate hope was to bring money to help India. Swamiji was inspired to travel to the West by ..., the Raja of Ramnad whose picture finds a place in this chapter. When Swamiji first entered the Columbian Exposition he might have thought, What a contrast! Just a few days before he had seen in India that the people were in rags and that basic amenities were often lacking. But, in U.S.A., even a cobbler spoke of and understood great ideas. Here he saw the glitter of the West. But all seemed to end in this glitter alone.

The fourth chapter has a few more than twenty-five photographs of which about ten are different scenes of the Parliament of Religions. There is a sketch of the Columbian Exposition. The Exposition had many objectives of which the most important perhaps was to bring different nations of the earth into a more friendly fellowship. Who or what could bring about such a great change? The field of inter-religious fellowship had an extremely frigid soil. Who possessed the gigantic personality to work out the impossible? Many newspaper clippings are reproduced to show that the Swami did have such great qualities as could accomplish the seemingly impossible task. At the end of the Parliament of Religions, Swamiji told the vast audience, 'The seed is put in the ground, and earth and air and water are placed around it. Does the seed become the earth, or the air, or the water? No. It becomes a plant, it develops after the law of its own growth...' Swamiji's work in the West began in right earnest now.

The fifth chapter of the book is about Swamiji's message to the West. Extracts from his various writing and lectures are given along with about thirty photographs. What was Swamiji's advice to the West? In the material realm, it was an advice to be moderate in enjoying luxuries. In the mental realm, his advice was to follow strict moral principles, to give up the so rampant defeatist attitude, and to take up the Vedantic ideal of strength. In the spiritual realm, it was the Atman that he spoke about. To manifest the inner divinity is the goal of religion, he said. His fundamental idea then, was the meeting

of the East and the West in every field so that there could be a harmonious growth. Was it necessary to unite the two different cultures? To quote Swamiji, 'Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter; but underneath, it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface: really it is full of tragic intensity. Now here, it is sad and gloomy on the outside, but underneath are carelessness and merriment.'

3. *Swamiji: A Bridge between the East and the West*

'I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under the false ideas of greatness, policy, or holiness—the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one.' In the sixth chapter, there are about thirty-two photographs. Of them, at least twenty-five are of people, specially Westerners, who were influenced by the teachings of Swamiji. With Swamiji as the bridge, many crossed over to the East in the realm of ideology. Important among them were Leon Landsberg, Josephine MacLeod, Sister Nivedita, and Max Müller. Swamiji wrote to E.T. Sturdy in his letter dated 13 February 1896, 'I want to give them dry, hard reason, softened in the sweetest syrup of love and made spicy with intense work, and cooked in the kitchen of Yoga, so that even a baby can easily digest it', and this he did.

The seventh chapter, 'Arise, Awake, Stop not till the goal is reached,' is about Swamiji's triumphant return to India after the first western tour. The Ramakrishna Mission Association was formed on the 1 May 1897 at Balaram Basu's house. This chapter ends with the note that Swamiji consecrated the Ramakrishna monastery at Belur on 9 December 1898. There are a few group photographs among the twenty-seven printed in this chapter. In June 1899, Swamiji left for the West on his second visit with the intention of establishing his work on firm grounds and this he did with telling effect. The bridge between the East and the West was ready now so that future generations could benefit from the union. He took Swami Turiyananda and Sister Nivedita

with him. The seventh chapter depicts scenes from this period of Swamiji's stay in the West. There are over fifty photographs, many of them showing Swamiji in lighter moods.

Then the time came for Swamiji's last day on earth, which forms the subject matter of the last chapter of the book. Pictures of him in his illness, the Math without him, the temple in his name, all speak about the pain of his departure. Incidents are quoted about how the spiritual consciousness of many was awakened by Swamiji with a mere touch, or by a few words, etc. The book ends with the photograph of the Belur Math as viewed from the river Ganges. This Math, Swamiji had prophesied, will be the centre from which spirituality will spread all the world over for the next 1500 years.

A word about the style used to write photo-captions. Since the name of Swamiji need not be repeatedly mentioned under his photographs, the mention of place and date of the photo taken is made. (See page 6 for example.) There are two photographs. The captions read thus: under the photo of Swamiji, 'Calcutta, ca 1886'. Under the photo of Ganges, 'Sunrise at Calcutta on the Ganges'. However, in some places, the name of Swamiji is mentioned. Say, for example, on page 19: 'Vivekananda, London, 1896', and on page 35: 'Vivekananda as an itinerant monk...'. On page 150, Swami Nirmalananda's name is included in the list of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples. And on page 108, there is a photo-caption which reads in part, '...left to right: Tarapada (an outside sadhu)...'. These may be taken care of in the next edition of the book.

Swami Chetanananda has done an excellent work in bringing out this book. Though mainly intended for the Westerners, it will certainly be a priceless acquisition in every home of Swamiji's lovers.

The book has a detailed reference list, a list acknowledging source material, a chronology of Swamiji's life, and the words of a few thinkers on Swamiji. Though mentioned in the end, the preface by Huston Smith and the cover design are splendid.

*Swami Sunirmalananda
Belur Math*

TALES AND PARABLES OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN VERSE: By Shiv Dhawan; publ. Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, C 80 Hauz Khas, New Delhi 110 016; 1995; pp. 76; Rs. 40/-.

Narrating a story to illustrate a moral is as old as prehistoric times. Narratives have always attracted people irrespective of age, sex, nationality, cultural background and intellectual prowess.

Sri Ramakrishna made brilliant use of the traditional method of telling tales and parables to bring home to simple minds profound metaphysical truths too difficult to grasp and comprehend in their abstract form. The master angler uses this treasure-trove of stories as a bait to hook us, only to show us the way to liberation. His homely stories narrated in simple colloquial Bengali pose no linguistic problem but touch the very core of the heart.

Sri Shiv Dhawan has perceived the child in an adult and has rendered some of the tales and parables of Sri Ramakrishna into verse with utmost ease and felicity. In this volume of 75 pages, Sri Dhawan has tried to capsulize the essence of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

In the introductory note, Sri Dhawan traces the history of the use of parables all over the world in all ages as a powerful mode of communication to convey metaphysical truths. He points out how Sri Ramakrishna, like Buddha and Mahavira, made a very effective use of the genre taking incidents for all times and climes. The selection of the parables is significant as they have shaped the author's world-view. He also categorically states that the purpose of the book is the awakening of individuals to a better purpose and goal in life.

Befitting the tradition, he begins his book with an invocation to Ganesha, the warder of all hurdles, and to Saraswati, the goddess of learning, the dispeller of darkness of ignorance and the bestower of enlightenment. The first section 'Pushpanjali' contains a brief biographical sketch of Sri Ramakrishna.

'Mata Saraswati Sri Sarada' is a hymn to

Sarada Mata—both the divine consort of Sri Ramakrishna and the goddess of learning. Sarada Devi is the principle of *prakriti* and Sri Ramakrishna, the *purusha*, and their advent into this world as divine parents is for the purpose of elevating the souls of millions of their children. 'The Jewel of all Jewels' is a powerful rendering of the life of Swami Vivekananda, the 'crusading philosopher', the 'spiritual thunder', who did not accept anything blindly but tested every truth in the crucible of experience. 'The Mahasamdhi' is the description of the last days of suffering of Sri Ramakrishna, which has been interpreted as 'Life of God', 'a mystical purpose unknown being fulfilled', and 'only the body suffering with esoteric meaning'. He is compared to Christ who sacrificed his own life to redeem the sinning humankind.

The remaining sections: 'Maya', 'Pride', and 'Faith' contain parables whose significance when properly understood will give a better perspective of the world, our own lives, and our attachment to the objects of the world because of the spell of *maya*. The stories in the first section warn us about the bane of worldliness and how desire is at the root of all suffering. Egoism together with pride, be it about book-learning or the acquisition of *siddhis* or about one's personal status, is a negative quality that one has to consciously and deliberately get rid of, and this truth is brought home to us through the parables under the section on 'Pride'.

The last section suggests how one should strive towards one's goal incessantly with the unquestioning faith and devotion of a child, and yet, using the power of discrimination, march forward till one reaches the 'diamond mine' of liberation.

As in the *Panchatantra* stories, the author tries to capsulize the moral of the story in the last stanza. The simple drawings, sixteen in number, by Chaitali Chatterji cast the desired visual impact on the reader. Together the verse form and illustration concentrate the attention of the reader on the true import of the parable.

The concluding free rendering of the original Sanskrit or Bengali songs on Mother

(Please turn over)

News and Reports

EAST MEETS WEST—

LIFE AND WORK OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

31 October 1996—29 November 1996

Bielefeld, Germany

An exposition titled 'East Meets West—Life and Work of Swami Vivekananda', organized by the Bielefeld Indo-German Friendship Society in cooperation with the Sociology of Development Research Center, Bielefeld University, was held in the premises of the Library of Linguistics, Bielefeld University, from 31 October to 29 November 1996.

The life and works of the great Indian philosopher and reformer were illustrated by photo documents and short explanatory texts.

The exposition included three lectures:

1. **Swami Chidbhasananda**, of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Vereniging, Amstelveen, Netherlands, on 'Vivekananda's Contribution to the Unity of Mankind' in *English* (31 October).

2. **Frank Ziesing**, psychologist, M.Sc., President of the Vedanta Society of Germany, on 'Life and Work of Swami Vivekananda' in *German* (4 November).

3. **Prof. Dr. Hiltrud Rüstau**, Berlin Humboldt University, on 'Eminent Women around Vivekananda' in *German* (8 November).

The exposition was open to the visitors

Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 10 PM.

The exposition aimed at acquainting the German public better with a personality whose socio-religious ideas help humanity considerably on its way to world peace and global unity. Religious belief should be coupled with scientific thinking and social reforms. The exposition further aimed at reminding the German public that Swami Vivekananda, in the course of his European tour a hundred years ago, had also visited Germany. In an epoch of materialistic and imperialistic activities, he had expressed and promulgated the message of Universal tolerance. □

Visiting Professor under Sri Swamy Vivekananda Chair.

*Extract from Order No. DV 7/Misc/96-97
dated 4 November 1996 issued by the
Registrar, University of Mysore*

Prof. Prabhushankara, Professor of Kanada (Retd.)... [was] appointed the First Visiting Professor of Sri Swamy Vivekananda Chair attached to the Department of Studies in Philosophy, Manasagangotri, Mysore 570 006.... [He] will hold this office for a period of one year from the date of his assuming this office... [and will] perform duties assigned to the... [said] Chair. The expenditure in this behalf shall be met out of the proceeds of the Endowment earmarked for Sri Swamy Vivekananda Chair in this University. □

Reviews and Notices

(Continued from previous page)

Sarada and Sri Ramakrishna give a perfect finish to the book. And in the 'River Sutra': 'Tell me, O Ganga, Suradhuni', is the recapitulation of all the important places, individuals and incidents that have influenced and have been influenced by the great Mas-

ter.

It is indeed a wonderful and rewarding experience to go through the book as one cannot but help complete it in one sitting.

Shanta Subba Rao
Hyderabad

HUMAN EXCELLENCE

FRESH FOOD

Mrigashreshthi of Shravasti was a very rich man with a fortune of twenty crore gold coins. His only thought and constant worry was how to amass more wealth. He was totally uninterested in the thought of religion, performance of charity or leading a spiritual life. His daughter-in-law, Vishakha, was a follower of Lord Buddha. Though Mrigarshreshthi was aware of the noble qualities in his daughter-in-law, yet his unceasing quest for more and more riches could not be checked by the noble lady.

One day, while Mrigarshreshthi was having dinner, Vishakha asked him, 'Father dear, how is the food today?'

Surprised at this question, Mrigarshreshthi replied, 'How can a person like you, so good in cooking, doubt your culinary skills? The food cooked by you is delicious as usual, and I am always satisfied with it.'

With eyes downcast, Vishakha spoke, 'Father, this is an illusion on your part. Actually this food is not fresh; it is stale and smells bad. It was always my desire to serve you only the freshest dishes. But I am helpless as your store-room lacks the provisions required for cooking fresh and delicious food.'

Completely taken aback by surprise, Mrigarshreshthi stopped eating and asked Vishakha, 'What is it you are saying, dear daughter?'

Vishakha answered in a serious tone, 'Father, the grains in your store-house, the wealth in your treasury, the cattle in your cow-sheds, these are all the fruits of meritorious acts performed by you in your past life. Why, I have never seen you do any act of charity. As such all your affluence is stale.'

These words had a profound effect on Mrigarshreshthi. He gained a new perspective on life, and turned to religion and acts of charity.